

DANCE IN TELUGU CINEMA: TRANSITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

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By

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **“DANCE IN TELUGU CINEMA – TRANSITIONS & TRANSFORMATIONS”** submitted by **BHOGIREDDY SRAVYA MANASA** bearing registration number **19SNPD01** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication in a bonafide work carried out by him/her under my supervision and guidance.

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DECLARATION

I, **Bhogireddy Sravya Manasa**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**Dance in Telugu Cinema: Transitions and Transformations**” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Prof. M Samba Siva Raju**, is a Bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any other degree or diploma. A report on plagiarism statistics from the University Librarian is enclosed.

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PREFACE

This work explores a dynamic and evolving art form that finds expression at the confluence of performance, cinema, and cultural memory—dance in Telugu cinema. From its inception during the early talkies to the grandeur of contemporary cinematic spectacles, the role of dance in Telugu films has undergone significant transitions and transformations. As a student of classical dance and an avid observer of cinema, I have attempted to view this evolution not merely as a visual element but as a reflection of deeper artistic, societal, and ideological shifts.

This thesis is, in many ways, an homage to the many choreographers, dancers, and filmmakers who have shaped the portrayal of dance on the Telugu silver screen. Their work, often under-acknowledged, reflects a negotiation between tradition and modernity, between rooted classical forms and globalized cinematic idioms. I have sought to trace these shifts with sensitivity and critical inquiry, attempting to read dance not just as performance, but as narrative, commentary, and even resistance.

The study has required me to navigate through a wide array of films, archival materials, reviews, interviews, and academic writings. Through this process, I have tried to construct a narrative that is at once analytical and appreciative.

While it is undeniable that cinematic dance has often mirrored prevailing power structures—of gender, caste, class, and politics—it has also served as a site of innovation and artistic liberation. My aim has been to understand these dualities with nuance and to document this journey with both historical awareness and contemporary relevance.

As a practitioner of Indian classical dance myself, I bring to this work an insider's empathy and an analytical lens. It is my belief that cinema has played a crucial role in mediating the perception of dance in the public imagination, often shaping how traditional art forms are consumed, adapted, and reinterpreted. This thesis, therefore, is both a personal and scholarly pursuit—an attempt to engage critically with the intersections of cinema, culture, and movement in the Telugu-speaking world.

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To all my Gurus in dance and the performing arts—thank you for instilling in me the values of discipline, expression, and dedication. Your teachings have served as the lens through which I viewed and analyzed cinematic dance.

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husband, Ravi Kumar Dhulipala, for constantly pushing me to grow and excel in my career. And to the most beautiful presence in my life, my son Sarthak Krish - thank you for your boundless love and understanding, for allowing me the space to pursue my dreams.

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LIST OF PLATES

S.No.	Plate Number	Name of the Plate
1	Plate-1.1	Scene from <i>Bhakta Prahlada</i> Movie
2	Plate-1.2	Movie Release Poster of <i>Draupadi Vastrapaharanam</i> (1936)
3	Plate-1.3	Movie Release Poster of <i>Gruhalakshmi</i> (1967)
4	Plate-1.4	Performance sequence from <i>Lava Kusa</i> (1963)
5	Plate-1.5	Movie Poster of <i>Oka Naari Vanda Tupakulu</i> (1973)
6	Plate-1.6	Performance Sequence from <i>Alluri Sitarama Raju</i> (1974)
7	Plate-1.7	Movie Poster of <i>Simhasanam</i> (1987)
8	Plate-1.8	Dance Sequence in <i>Sri Krishna Tulabharam</i> (1966)
9	Plate-1.9	Folk Dance Sequence in <i>Beedala Patlu</i> (1972)
10	Plate-2.1	Indias First Perfect Talkie movie “Alam-Ara”
11	Plate-2.2	Outdoor Yakshagana performance
12	Plate-2.3	Andhra Natyam
13	Plate-2.4	Perini dancers performing Shiva Tandavam
14	Plate-2.5	Burra Katha performance
15	Plate-2.6	Photo of Veedi Natakam
16	Plate-2.7	Shooting of silent films by Nataraja Mudaliar
17	Plate-2.8	Image from Bhaktaprahlada movie (1931)
18	Plate-2.9	Image of Vempati Pedda Satyam
19	Plate-2.10	Image of Vedantam Raghaviah
20	Plate-2.11	Image of C S R Anjaneyulu
21	Plate-2.12	Image of Rukhmini devi Arundale
22	Plate-2.13	Images of Vempati Chinna Satyam and Pasumarthi Krishna Murthy
23	Plate-2.14	Travancore Sisters (Lalitha, Padmini and Ragini)
24	Plate-2.15	Star heroines of Golden era (1950s-1970s)
25	Plate-2.16	Influential choreographers Sundaram master and Prabhudeva
26	Plate-2.17	Choreographers turned to directors
27	Plate-2.18	Director Vishwanth known for blending classical arts with cinematic storytelling

28	Plate-3.1	Dance sequence in <i>Sri Krishna Leelalu</i> movie
29	Plate-3.2	Dance sequence in <i>Dakshayagnam</i> (1938)
30	Plate-3.3	Dance sequence in <i>Bhakta Markandeya</i> (1938)
31	Plate-3.4	Dance sequence in <i>Sri Venkateswara Mahatyam</i> (1939)
32	Plate-3.5	Dance sequence in <i>Bhakta Potana</i> (1942)
33	Plate-3.6	Dance sequence in <i>Paduka Pattabhishekam</i> (1945)
34	Plate-3.7	Dance sequence in <i>Yogi Vemana</i> (1947)
35	Plate-3.8	Traditional Dance Sequence from <i>Devadasu</i> (1953) Movie
36	Plate-3.9	Dance Sequence from <i>Jayabheri</i> (1959) Movie
37	Plate-3.10	Dance Sequence from <i>Mahakavi Kalidasu</i> (1960) Movie
38	Plate-3.11	Dance Sequence from <i>Lava Kusa</i> (1963) Movie
39	Plate-3.12	Dance Sequence from <i>Nartanasala</i> (1963) Movie
40	Plate-3.13	Dance Sequence from <i>Sati Savitri</i> (1961) movie
41	Plate-3.14	Dance Sequence from <i>Bhakta Tukaram</i> (1963) movie
42	Plate-3.15	Dance Sequence from <i>Shakuntala</i> (1966) movie
43	Plate-3.16	Dance Sequence from movie <i>Shankharabharanam</i>
44	Plate-3.17	Dance Sequence of Bhanu Priya from <i>Swarnakamalam</i> movie
45	Plate-3.18	Dance Sequences from song <i>Shiva Poojaku</i> in <i>Swarnakamalam</i> movie
46	Plate-3.19	Different Traditional Dance Sequences from <i>Subhaleka</i> Movie
47	Plate-3.20	Dance sequence from movie <i>Devadasu</i>
48	Plate-3.21	Dance sequence in the Film <i>Gundamma Katha</i>
49	Plate-3.22	Dance sequences from films <i>Gentleman</i> and <i>Premikudu</i>
50	Plate-3.23	Dance sequence of song “Aaresukoboyi Paresukunnu” in <i>Adavi Ramudu</i> (1977)
51	Plate-3.24	Dance sequence from the song “Bangaru Kodipetta” in the film <i>Gharana Mogudu</i> (1992).
52	Plate-3.25	Allu Arjun in “Ringa Ringa” song– <i>Arya 2</i> (2009)
53	Plate-3.26	Dance sequences from song “Butta Bomma” in <i>Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo</i>

54	Plate-3.27	Dance sequences from songs “O Subba Rao ” and “ <i>Neevu mardiva</i> ”
55	Plate-3.28	Dance sequence from <i>Baava Bavamaridi</i> Movie
56	Plate-3.29	Dance sequence from <i>Pokiri</i> and <i>Yogi</i>
57	Plate-3.30	Dance sequence of song “Kevvu Keka” – Pawan Kalyan in <i>Gabbar Singh</i> (2012)
58	Plate-3.31	Dance sequence of song “Swing Zara” – Jai Lava Kusha (2017)
59	Plate-3.32	Dance sequence of song “Oo Antava Mava” – Pushpa (2021)
60	Plate-3.33	Dance sequence from <i>Baahubali: The Beginning</i> (2015) — “Dhivara” song Tamannah performing with CGI-enhanced waterfall and forest
61	Plate-3.34	CGI-heavy dance in <i>Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy</i> (2019). <i>Patriotic group performance amidst fiery visual effects.</i>
62	Plate-3.35	“Seeti Maar” – Allu Arjun in <i>DJ (Duvvada Jagannadham)</i> (2017). Camera zooming and rotating around high-speed moves
63	Plate-3.36	Dance sequence of Ram Charan and Samantha in <i>Rangasthalam</i>
64	Plate-3.37	Dance sequence of <i>Aa Gattununtaava</i> song in <i>Rangasthalam</i> Movie
65	Plate-4.1	Dance sequence from movie <i>Harischandra</i> (1935)
66	Plate-4.2	Dance sequence from movie <i>Mala Pilla</i> (1938)
67	Plate-4.3	Dance sequence from movie <i>Malli Pelli</i> (1939)
68	Plate-4.4	Dance sequence from movie <i>Rythu Bidda</i> (1939)
69	Plate-4.5	Dance sequence from movie <i>Bhookailas</i> (1940)
70	Plate-4.6	Dance sequence from movie <i>Sumangali</i> (1940)
71	Plate-4.7	Dance sequence from movie <i>Devata</i> (1941)
72	Plate-4.8	Dance sequence from movie <i>Bhakta Potana</i> (1942)
73	Plate-4.9	Classical Dance Performance from <i>Bhagyalakshmi</i> movie(1943)
74	Plate-4.10	Classical Dance Performance from <i>Krishna Prema</i> movie(1943)
75	Plate-4.11	Classical Dance Performance from <i>Swargaseema</i> movie(1945)
76	Plate-4.12	Classical Dance Performance from <i>Mugguru Maratilu</i> movie(1946)

77	Plate-4.13	Dance Sequence from <i>Gollabhama</i> (1947)
78	Plate-4.14	Dance Sequence from <i>Palnati Yuddham</i> (1947)
79	Plate-4.15	Classical Devotional Dance Scene from Yogi Vemana (1947) – Aparani Tapamayera
80	Plate-4.16	Dance Sequence from <i>Balaraju</i> (1948)
81	Plate-4.17	Classical dance performance in <i>Laila Majnu</i> (1949)
82	Plate-4.18	Classical and free-style dance scenes from <i>Keelu Gurram</i> (1949)
83	Plate-4.19	Dance sequence by Sriranjani in <i>Gunasundari Katha</i> (1949)
84	Plate-4.20	Dance sequence from <i>Gunasundari Katha</i> (1949)
85	Plate-4.21	Dance sequence from <i>Keelu Gurram</i> (1949)
86	Plate-4.22	Dance sequence from <i>Jeevitham</i> (1950)
87	Plate-4.23	Dance sequence from <i>Shavukaru</i> (1950)
88	Plate-4.24	Dance sequence from <i>Palletoori Pilla</i> (1950)
89	Plate-4.25	Dance sequence from <i>Sri Lakshmmamma Katha</i> (1950)
90	Plate-4.26	Dance sequence from film <i>Malliswari</i> (1951)
91	Plate-4.27	Dance sequence from <i>Nirdoshi</i> (1951)
92	Plate-4.28	Dance stills from movie <i>Paatala Bhairavi</i> (1951)
93	Plate-4.29	Street-Style Folk Dance – Representing 'Lambaadi Lambaadi' from <i>Dharma Devata</i>
94	Plate-4.30	Dance sequences from <i>Palletooru</i> Movie
95	Plate-4.31	Dance sequences from <i>Kanna Thalli</i> Movie
96	Plate-4.32	Facial Expressions Over Dance – A New Trend in <i>Pakka Inti Ammayi</i> (1953)
97	Plate-4.33	Dance sequences from <i>Pichipullayya</i> Movie (1953)
98	Plate-4.34	Dance sequences from <i>Aggi Ramudu</i> (1954)
99	Plate-4.35	Dance sequences from <i>Pedda Manushulu</i> (1954)
100	Plate-4.36	Free-Style Dance Expressing Emotion – From 'Edche Vallani Edavani', <i>Ardhangi</i> (1955)
101	Plate-4.37	Dance sequences from, <i>Dongaramudu</i> (1955)
102	Plate-4.38	Classical and Expressive Dance Sequences – From <i>Missamma</i> (1955)
103	Plate-4.39	Free-Style Dance Movements – From <i>Jayam Manade</i> (1956)
104	Plate-4.40	Images from the movie <i>Chintamani</i> (1956)

105	Plate-4.41	Simple Steps, Strong Emotions – Dance Moments in <i>Muddubidda</i> (1956)
106	Plate-4.42	Dance Scenes from <i>Badipantulu</i> (1958)
107	Plate-4.43	Dance Sequences – From <i>Appu Chesi Pappu Koodu</i> (1959)
108	Plate-4.44	Dance Sequences from <i>Manorama</i> (1959) and <i>Missamma</i> (1962)
109	Plate-4.45	Dance Sequences from <i>Pelikanuka</i> (1960)
110	Plate-4.46	Dance Sequences from <i>Bhakta Jayadeva</i> (1961)
111	Plate-4.47	Dance Sequences from <i>Gulebakavali Katha</i> (1962)
112	Plate-4.48	Dance Sequences from <i>Nartanasala</i> (1963)
113	Plate-4.49	Dance Sequences from <i>Mooga Manasulu</i> (1964)
114	Plate-4.50	Dance Sequences from <i>Thene Manasulu</i> (1965)
115	Plate-4.51	Dance Sequences from <i>Sri Krishna Pandaveeyam</i> (1966)
116	Plate-4.52	Dance Sequences from <i>Ave Kallu</i> (1967)
117	Plate-4.53	Dance Sequences from <i>Sukha Dukhalu</i> (1968)
118	Plate-4.54	Dance Sequences from <i>Aatmiyulu</i> (1969)
119	Plate-4.55	Dance Sequences from <i>Maro Prapancham</i> (1970)
120	Plate-4.56	Dance Sequences from <i>Dasara Bullodu</i> (1971)
121	Plate-4.57	Dance Sequences from <i>Prem Nagar</i> (1971)
122	Plate-4.58	Dance Sequences from <i>Badi Panthulu</i> (1972)
123	Plate-4.59	Dance Sequences from <i>Kanna Koduku</i> (1973)
124	Plate-4.60	Dance Sequences from <i>Jeevana Jyothi</i> (1975)
125	Plate-4.61	Dance Sequences from <i>Siri Siri Muvva</i> (1976)
126	Plate-4.62	Dance Sequences from <i>Adavi Ramudu</i> (1977)
127	Plate-4.63	Dance Sequences from <i>Maro Charitra</i> (1978)
128	Plate-4.64	Dance Sequences from <i>Vetagadu</i> (1979)
129	Plate-4.65	Dance Sequences from <i>Ooriki Monagadu</i> (1981)
130	Plate-4.66	Dance Sequences from <i>Devata</i> (1983)
131	Plate-4.67	Dance Sequence from <i>Abhilasha</i> (1983)
132	Plate-4.68	Dance Sequences from <i>Challenge</i> (1984)
133	Plate-4.69	Dance sequence from Donga(1985) inspired from Micheal Jackson’s “Thriller”
134	Plate-4.70	Dance sequence of song ‘Merupula La La La’

135	Plate-4.71	Dance sequence of Chiranjeevi in song 'Padaharella Vayasu'
136	Plate-4.72	Dance sequence from <i>State Rowdy</i> (1989)
137	Plate-4.73	Dance sequence of song Star Megastar from Kodama Simham(1990)
138	Plate-4.74	Dance sequence from 'Abbani Teeyani Debba' by Chiranjeevi & Sridevi
139	Plate-4.75	Dance sequence of songs 'Yamaho' and 'Dhinakkuthaa Kasakkuro'
140	Plate-4.76	Dance sequence of song 'Vana Vana Velluvaye'
141	Plate-4.77	Dance sequence of Bangaru Kodipetta song
142	Plate-4.78	Dance sequences from Muta Mestri (1993)
143	Plate-4.79	Dance sequences from Ninne Pelladata (1996)
144	Plate-4.80	Dance sequences from Tholli Prema (1998)
145	Plate-4.81	Dance sequences from Thammudu (1999)
146	Plate-4.82	<i>Dance sequence of "Aata Kaavala" from Annaya(2000)</i>
147	Plate-4.83	<i>Dance sequence from Premathora movie(2001)</i>
148	Plate-4.84	Dance sequence of hook step from <i>Indra</i> (2002)
149	Plate-4.85	<i>Dance sequence from Raghavendra(2003)</i>
150	Plate-4.86	<i>Dance sequence from Varsham(2004)</i>
151	Plate-4.87	<i>Dance sequence from Billa(2009)</i>
152	Plate-4.88	Allu Arjun performing street-style dance in "Ringa Ringa"
153	Plate-4.89	Allu Arjun using contemporary gestures in "My Love is Gone" song
154	Plate-4.90	Dance sequence of "Kevvu Keka" song
155	Plate-4.91	Street-style choreography in "Top Lechipoddi" song
156	Plate-4.92	"Cinema Choopistha Mava" song
157	Plate-4.93	Dance sequence in "You Are My MLA" song and Popularhook step in "Blockbuster" song
158	Plate-4.94	Dance Performance in "Ammadu Let's Do Kummudu" song
159	Plate-4.95	Sai Pallavi's organic folk steps in "Vachinde" song
160	Plate-4.96	"Naatu Naatu" Choreography

161	Plate-4.97	Symbolic Choreographic Blocking in “Dosti” (RRR, 2022)
162	Plate-4.98	Image from Kurchi Madathapetti from Guntur Kaaram
163	Plate-4.99	Kissik song Image from Pushpa-2 (2024)
164	Plate-4.100	Chuttamalle dance still from Devara movie (2024)
165	Plate-4.101	Special Song Performances by Female actors

CONTENTS

Sl.No	Chapters	Title of the Chapter	Page Numbers
1	Chapter I	Introduction	13 - 55
2	Chapter II	Historical Perspective of Dance in Telugu Cinema	56 - 90
3	Chapter III	Evolution of Dance in Telugu Cinema	91 - 129
4	Chapter IV	Transitions and Transformations	130 - 220
5	Chapter V	Conclusion	220 - 229
6		Bibliography	230 - 231
7		Articles	232 - 245

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CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

Brief about Telugu Cinema

India holds the incredible difference of being the biggest producer of movies globally, encompassing a full-size array of languages and cultures. Annually, India produces nearly 3000 celluloid movies, of which about 1,800 are feature films¹. Indian cinema caters to a various target audience, with function films being made in 24 exclusive languages, among these Hindi takes the lead, observed by using Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada. The Indian film industry is renowned for its cultural diversity, creativity, and capability to unite human beings through storytelling. With Bollywood, Tollywood, Kollywood, and Sandalwood main the manner, Indian cinema has turn out to be an effective medium of expression and amusement.² These films no longer only captivate domestic audiences but also enjoy developing reputation on international systems. In addition to characteristic movies, India additionally excels in generating documentaries, quick movies, and animation content. The industry's rich history and evolving generation have contributed to its worldwide reputation and streaming services in Netflix and amazonprime³. It is predicted that Indian cinema generates billions of bucks in sales annually, developing several opportunities for artists, technicians, and workers in related industries.

In 1921, the silent movie *Bhishma Pratigna* is extensively regarded as the first Telugu characteristic movie, marking the inception of Telugu cinema. The mythical Raghupathi Venkaiah Naidu, who produced and exhibited this film, is well known as the "Father of Telugu

¹ FICCI-EY Report on Media & Entertainment (2023)

² Ganti, T. (2013). *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*. Routledge.

³ Rajadhyaksha, A., & Willemen, P. (1999). *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*. British Film Institute.

Cinema.⁴ His pioneering efforts laid the inspiration for what might become one of the most vibrant and influential regional movie industries in India.

The first Telugu talkie, *Bhakta Prahlada* (1932), directed by H. M. Reddy, introduced Surabhi Kamalabai as the first Telugu heroine, making history in Indian cinema. In 1936, the "Saraswathi Talkies" Telugu company was launched with the film *Draupadi Vastrabharanam*. Around the same time, the Nidamarthy brothers constructed the first film studio in Rajahmundry, a pivotal development in the Telugu film industry.



Photo Courtesy: <https://telugucineblitz.blogspot.com/2009/07/bhakta-prahlada-movie-details.html>

Plate - 1.1 : Scene from *Bhakta Prahlada* Movie



Photo Courtesy:

Plate - 1.2 : Movie Release Poster of *Draupadi Vastrabharanam* (1936)

⁴ Rao, B.V.S. (2000). *A History of Telugu Cinema*. Hyderabad Film Society.

Telugu cinema also broke new ground with films like *Premavijayam*, the first social film in Telugu, and *Anasuya Dhruva*, the first film featuring an all-children cast. A significant turning point came with the release of *Gruhalakshmi*, a film that inspired revolutionary themes in movies such as *Sumangali*, *Malapilla*, and *Raithu Bidda*.



Photo Courtesy:
Plate - 1.3 : Movie Release Poster of Gruhalakshmi (1967)

Innovations in Telugu cinema included the recording of the first male playback song for the film *Vandemataram*, using a child's voice. However, the first official male playback song is attributed to the movie *Devata*. The first female playback song was recorded for *Bhakta Potana* in 1942. Technological advancements continued with *Lavakusha* (1963), the first full-length Telugu color production, and *Oka Nari Vanda Tuppakulu* (1973), the first black-and-white cinemascope film.



Photo Courtesy:
Plate - 1.4 : Performance sequence from Lava Kusa (1963)



Photo Courtesy:
Plate - 1.5 : Movie Poster of *Oka Naari Vanda Tupakulu* (1973)

Telugu cinema reached new heights with Alluri Sitarama Raju (1974), the first full-duration colour and cinemascope movie, and *Simhasanam* (1987), the first 70mm production.



Photo Courtesy:
Plate - 1.6 : Performance Sequence from *Alluri Sitarama Raju* (1974)



Photo Courtesy:

Plate - 1.7 : Movie Poster of *Simhasanam* (1987)

Telugu cinema has constantly driven barriers in storytelling, generation, and artistry. It has produced numerous iconic films and mythical actors who have turned out to be household names across India. Regarded for its grandeur, emotional depth, and cultural richness, Telugu cinema continues to captivate audiences internationally. Its capability to combine tradition with innovation has made it an effective medium of expression, showcasing the vibrancy and resilience of Telugu culture. With an ever-increasing global target market and contributions to Indian cinema that are both specific and enduring, Telugu films have cemented their vicinity as a cornerstone of the Indian film industry. The dedication and creativity of its filmmakers, actors, and technicians make certain that Telugu cinema will keep to thrive for generations to come.

Background of Dance in Telugu Cinema

Dance has constantly been used appreciably in Telugu Cinema as a powerful story telling and expressive medium, to understand its historic heritage, one needs to observe its improvement from silent films to the vibrant musical extravaganzas of current cinema. Due to the fact its inception dance has played a vital function in Telugu films, converging together with the genre.⁵ It commenced with classical customs and mythical themes, moved to scenes stimulated via Bollywood and folk, and now integrates current technology and international traits. One of the earliest Telugu-language movies, *Bhakta Prahlada* (1931), became also India's first Telugu talkie. With a view to highlight the religious and mythological aspects on the coronary heart in their memories, those early movies employed traditional dance patterns. Frequently finished in temple-like settings, dance sequences have been intended to awaken feelings of devotion and reverence. Kuchipudi, Odissi, and Bharatanatyam had been emphasized because of their robust

⁵ Sundararaman, R. (2008). *Indian Film Music: History and Style*. Sahitya Akademi.

ties to Indian non secular and cultural traditions.⁶ The mid-1900s noticed the discharge of seminal movies like Mayabazar and Malliswari (1951).

Through problematic sets and innovative choreography, Mayabazar included conventional factors into its story even as fusing classical bureaucracy with local dance traditions to attraction to a much wider audience.

The advent of Vempati Chinna Satyam into Telugu cinema significantly altered the portrayal of Kuchipudi, a conventional dance shape native to Andhra Pradesh. a good way to deliver dancing sequences in conventional movies extra realism and refinement, he made positive that motions adhered to standard techniques at the same time as being altered for cinematic storytelling. beneath his steerage, the choreography balanced accuracy and expressiveness to improve the visible attraction of movies like Sri Krishna Tulabharam (1966) and Nartanasala (1963)⁷. Further to maintaining Telugu cinema's cultural identification, his paintings set a excessive trendy for integrating classical dance into movement snap shots.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=P6ANRGNmvAE&t=890s>
Plate - 1.8 : Dance Sequence in *Sri Krishna Tulabharam* (1966)

As Indian cinema advanced, Telugu directors started out to mimic Bollywood, particularly the emphasis on lavish song and dance sequences that fused amusement with narration. Bollywood created good sized choreography with well-coordinated group dances, tricky costumes, and scenic backdrops. This technique changed into adapted for Telugu cinema

⁶ Vatsyayan, K. (1997). *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*. Sangeet Natak Akademi.

⁷ Pasricha, A. (2006). *Kuchipudi: Indian Classical Dance Art*. Abhinav Publications

to match its local aesthetics, main to a fusion of conventional and folks dance bureaucracy with modern dance techniques.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMCc-F_VftU
Plate - 1.9 : Dance Sequence in *Beedala Patlu* (1972)

The rise of choreographers like Prabhu Deva and Raghava Lawrence similarly improved this tendency. known as "India's Michael Jackson," Deva introduced a completely unique fusion of breakdancing, hip hop, and freestyle to Telugu movies, making dance scenes appear extra vibrant and youngsters-oriented. Telugu dance choreography gained popularity for its complex organization bureaucracy and lively dances, which Raghava Lawrence introduced. Because of global exposure from the Oscars, film festivals, and streaming systems, Indian cinema has been able to impact dance around the sector. Telugu films, which incorporated Western dance paperwork like jazz, hip-hop, salsa, or even modern-day freestyle into their plots, embraced Hollywood-fashion choreography. these influences gave Telugu dance routines more intricacy and global enchantment, which aided within the enterprise's capability to attract each domestic and worldwide audiences.

In modern Telugu cinema, dance has transformed from a means of delivering stories to a spectacle and a representation of cultural identity. Songs with distinctive hook steps go viral and spread further on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok. In order to appeal to audiences worldwide, dance sequences are now created with a focus on energy, creative imagery, and accessibility.

Questions to Be Addressed

1. How has dance in Telugu cinema changed over time, moving from early mythological and devotional themes to contemporary commercial formats?
2. What were the cultural and cinematic milestones that significantly transformed dance styles in Telugu films?
3. What effects did technology and globalization have on Telugu film's choreography and presentation?
4. What role did classical dance forms like Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam, and others play in shaping the dance narrative in early and contemporary Telugu films?
5. How did actors and choreographers contribute to creating iconic dance moments in Telugu cinema?
6. How does geography and culture influence dance in Telugu cinema?

Aims and Objectives

Aims:

1. To explore the evolution of dance in Telugu cinema – Analyse the historical progression and how dance has been incorporated in Telugu films from the early days to modern cinema.
2. To examine the cultural significance of dance in Telugu films – Investigate how dance in Telugu cinema reflects, shapes, or amplifies cultural norms, traditions, and societal values.
3. To assess the role of dance in narrative storytelling – Investigate how dance sequences contribute to character development, plot progression, and emotional expression in Telugu films.

4. To evaluate the impact of dance choreography and performances – Explore the artistic elements of choreography, including innovation, style, and technique, and how they influence audience reception.
5. To study the influence of classical and contemporary dance forms in Telugu cinema – Examine the incorporation of Indian classical dance in general & in Kuchipudi , Bharatanatyam in particular alongside modern and western dance styles in Telugu films.

Objectives:

1. To analyse iconic dance numbers in Telugu films – Identify and analyse key dance sequences from prominent Telugu films and assess their role in shaping the film's success or popularity.
2. To investigate the contribution of choreographers and dancers – Study the contributions of renowned choreographers and dancers in the Telugu film industry and their impact on the evolution of dance in films.
3. To understand the interplay between music and dance – Examine the relationship between film music and choreography, and how music influences the design of dance sequences.
4. To explore the socio-political context of dance in Telugu cinema – Look into how dance reflects the changing social, political, and cultural landscapes of Telugu-speaking regions.
5. To evaluate the role of dance in Telugu cinema's global reach – Assess how dance sequences in Telugu films contribute to the international appeal of the industry, particularly in the context of the global popularity of Indian dance.

6. To examine the usage of dance for selling stars and films – analyse how dance is used to construct the photo of stars, and how it contributes to the marketing and promoting of Telugu movies.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1:

Globalization and Technological Developments as Drivers of Dance Transitions and Transformations in Telugu Film

Technological Impact:

1. High-Definition Cameras: those cameras improved the visual enchantment of dance workouts via enhancing visual fine and permitting complicated digicam angles and moves.
2. Slick transitions among dance pictures and different results have been made feasible by sophisticated enhancing techniques made possible by way of advanced enhancing software program.
3. special effects: brought to the dance sequences' visible extravaganza by using building fantastical and innovative settings.

Globalization's Influence:

1. Publicity to global Dance patterns: Had an impact on Telugu film's adoption of Western dance bureaucracy like jazz, hip-hop, and modern-day dance.
2. International movie patterns: New dance sequences and narrative approaches have been inspired via publicity to global movie styles, specially Bollywood and Hollywood.

- 3.Go-Cultural exchange: Promoted partnerships among Indian and foreign choreographers, ensuing within the development of special and hybrid dance paperwork.

Hypothesis 2:

Dance creativity is pushed by target audience expectancies and business viability.

- 1.Converting target market Tastes: As Telugu filmgoers get more sophisticated, there's a growing need for more inventive and putting dance scenes.
2. Industrial success: through drawing bigger audiences and bringing in extra money at the field office, dance exercises have end up a key thing of Telugu movies' business fulfilment.
3. Advertising and advertising: To boom the buzz and enthusiasm surrounding films and increase their monetary viability, dance sequences are employed as promotional strategies.

Hypothesis 3:

The Influence of Legendary Choreographers and Actors

1. Trendsetting: famous actors and choreographers have the capacity to popularize specific dance workouts, patterns, and moves.
2. Fascinating Performances: They captivate audiences with their compelling level presence and charismatic performances, which beautify the impact of dance routines.
3. Innovation and Experimentation: They introduce clean, methods and styles, pushing the boundaries of dance choreography.
4. Legacy and proposal: future generations of actors, dancers, and directors are stimulated by means of their contributions to the development of Telugu cinema.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

This section discusses key books and articles on dance in cinema, highlighting their contributions and identifying gaps that my research addresses.

One of the earliest writings on Indian dance in the form of a book published in 2004 by Sunil Kothari⁸. It is a seminal work that explores the evolving landscape of Indian dance. It brings together essays from scholars, practitioners, and critics, highlighting how traditional Indian dance forms have transformed over time due to various cultural, social, and technological influences. The book discusses how traditional dance forms like Bharatanatyam, Odissi, and Kathak have been reinterpreted in contemporary contexts. It highlights choreographers who have experimented with these styles, blending classical aesthetics with modern narratives and movement vocabularies. Some chapters explore the role of film and digital media in reshaping Indian dance, particularly how Bollywood and regional cinema have popularized classical and folk forms in new ways. Various dance pioneers have introduced experimental choreographic techniques, incorporating themes of gender, politics, and identity. Most of the people of the essays on this e -book are written by practitioners who're reflecting on their stories, but there also are contributions from non-practitioners. for example, Kapila Vatsyayan, a notably influential Indian writer and student who has performed a substantial position in launching a essential debate within Indian dance, wrote an essay approximately the pioneering choreographer Uday Shankar. other essays were written by way of dance critics like Kothari, Arundhati Subrahmanyam, and British journalist Sanjoy Roy.

One essay from this book is written by the late Manjushri Chaki Sircar, who founded the Dancers' Guild in Calcutta. She and her daughter Ranjabati developed a novel methodology

⁸ Sunil Kothari , *New Directions in Indian Dance*, 2003

that eventually evolved into a complete dance technique called Navanritya. Chaki Sircar's article in this book on Tagore and the modernization of dance highlights the great Bengali poet's acceptance of Southeast Asian and Western influences as a result of his cosmopolitanism. He distilled his own idea of dance and his own idiom from this intriguing combination, which was also influenced by classic Indian forms like Kathakali and Manipuri.

In another section of this book, Chandralekha also reflects on creative process. Chandralekha, a pioneering choreographer in Indian dance since 1984, has been at the forefront of innovation, shaping contemporary dance on a global scale. As an internationally recognized artist, she has had a profound influence on modern dance practices. In one of the sections, she reflects on her own artistic journey, emphasizing that "issue is not tradition versus modernity . . . the task of the artist is to modernize the tradition through the creative process". The next segment of this e-book, innovations in precise forms, includes contributions from Kumudini Lakhia, who explores her choreographic innovations in Kathak; Sunil Kothari, who examines Manipuri dance; and Ranjabati Sircar, daughter of Manjushri Chaki Sircar, who discusses Navanritya. The untimely passing of each mother and daughter has been a profound loss, impacting now not handiest the power of Navanritya however also the landscape of Indian dance as an entire. In the above narration of the entire book, it just provides a broad and pan-Indian perspective on dance evolution, covering classical, contemporary, and experimental forms across different regions. It explores how Bharatanatyam, Odissi, Kathak, and other styles have been reinterpreted over time. There are no discussions on dance transitions in Telugu cinema particularly & there has been only a mention of Dance in Bollywood Cinema.

Marcoux⁹ Erica in her article "The Globalization of Bollywood Dance," explores the spread of Bollywood dance beyond India, analysing the factors that contribute to its global

⁹ Marcoux, Erica . "The Globalization of Bollywood Dance." Interrogating Dance Globalization. N.p.,21July2013.Web.5May2014.

appeal, the ways it is adopted in different cultures, and the challenges of maintaining authenticity in an ever-evolving dance form. Erica further mentions that Bollywood dance, which blends classical Indian, folk, and Western dance elements, has gained immense popularity due to the expansion of the Indian film industry, increased global travel, and widespread internet access. The vibrant, expressive, and energetic nature of Bollywood dance appeals to a diverse audience, making it an attractive performance art beyond Indian cinema. Over time, Bollywood's influence has reached dance schools, television shows, and stage performances across continents, from North America to Europe, Africa, and beyond. This book further mentions that one of the primary reasons for Bollywood dance's globalization is the large Indian diaspora, which has helped introduce Indian cultural elements to other parts of the world. Indian communities abroad have played a significant role in organizing cultural festivals, workshops, and dance classes, making Bollywood dance more accessible to non-Indians. Furthermore, in this book, she says Bollywood movies, available through streaming services and social media, have allowed audiences worldwide to engage with the music, dance, and aesthetics of Indian cinema. Erica further says "...as Bollywood dance spreads globally, it has been adapted and fused with various other dance forms, including hip-hop, salsa, jazz, and contemporary styles. Dance instructors outside India often modify Bollywood choreography to cater to Western audiences, blending it with popular local trends. This fusion has given rise to innovative dance styles, making Bollywood more inclusive and versatile. However, this adaptation also raises questions about authenticity. Some purists argue that the essence of Bollywood dance is diluted when it is removed from its cinematic and cultural context. Traditionalists emphasize the importance of maintaining the classical and folk influences that define Bollywood dance, while others appreciate the evolving nature of the art form as a reflection of cultural exchange. There is also a mention of Author Writer Drid Williams in this

book where he discusses his strong disgust toward the dance style in an article that connects Bollywood dance to post-modern dance. “Williams point of view brings up the question of authenticity in dance traditions. The Kathak’s roots are in storytelling, and the movements were often performed as part of some rituals. Bharatantayam is even further linked to spirituality; in its early forms, dating back to 1000 BC, the dance was performed as an act of the utmost devotion to the Hindu gods. The Western adaptations made to and the sexualization of the classical Kathak and Bharatanatyam dance forms may be considered offensive, and in being altered, may lose their original intentions and meanings.”

This book, *The globalization of Bollywood dance* is a testament to its universal appeal and adaptability. While it continues to thrive as a global art form, the challenge lies in balancing innovation with cultural preservation. As Bollywood dance evolves, it is essential to recognize and respect its roots while embracing its fusion with contemporary styles. Marcoux’s article sheds light on this ongoing transformation, offering insight into how Bollywood dance serves as both a cultural bridge and a dynamic, ever-changing expression of movement.

In the year 2017, Gehlawat¹⁰ et.al, have published a research article “The evolution of song and dance in Hindi cinema” in south Asian popular culture, says the history of Hindi cinema is deeply intertwined with song and dance, which have been fundamental elements since the advent of sound in Indian films. This article mentions that from *Alam Ara* (1931), India’s first talkie, to contemporary Bollywood, song and dance have shaped storytelling and cinematic aesthetics. Scholars such as Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen acknowledge that music and choreography became the “mainstay” of Indian cinema, evolving in style and significance over the decades. Despite their centrality, these elements have been both celebrated and criticized, often seen as excessive by critics who favoured realism in cinema.

¹⁰ Gehlawat, A., & Dudrah, R. (2017). The evolution of song and dance in Hindi cinema. *South Asian Popular Culture*, 15(2–3), 103–108.

Further authors specify that notably, renowned filmmaker Satyajit Ray critiqued Hindi films for their use of song and dance, considering them disruptive to narrative continuity. However, even he acknowledged their striking compositions and innovation, such as filming lyrics against varied scenic backgrounds, which he regarded as a “wholly cinematic” technique. Over time, song picturization has transitioned from simple dance sequences around trees to elaborate, choreographed productions featuring professional dancers and exotic locations. These transformations have paralleled shifts in filmmaking technology, performance styles, and audience expectations. Further, this article says that the scholarly discourse surrounding song and dance in Bollywood has also evolved significantly. Initially dismissed as distractions, they have now become subjects of serious academic inquiry. Earlier studies often treated “song and dance” as a single, inseparable entity, but modern scholars, including ethnomusicologists and dance researchers, have started analysing them as distinct yet interconnected elements. Author’s specify that the book *Global Bollywood* (2008) by Sujata Moorti and Sangita Gopal was among the first comprehensive studies of this topic, though it still conflated the two terms. Recognizing this gap, newer research efforts aim to disarticulate song from dance, allowing for a deeper exploration of their individual cinematic and cultural roles. Following their research, authors specify that a key question driving contemporary research is whether Bollywood is moving away from its traditional reliance on song and dance. Some scholars argue that Western filmmaking conventions have influenced newer Hindi films, leading to a decline in lip-synced song sequences. However, this claim remains contested, as song and dance continue to evolve rather than disappear. For instance, filmmakers have incorporated them in end-credit sequences or as background scores rather than standalone performances. The article also highlights various scholarly contributions to the field like Author Gregory Booth explores how playback technology transformed song production in the 1930s, impacting vocal techniques and cinematography. Another author Usha Iyer, applying choreo musicological theory, reclaims

dance as an independent cinematic element, challenging the traditional focus on music over movement. Pavitra Sundar analyzes the shifting role of *qawwalis*, from expressions of romance to spiritual and hybridized techno-infused performances. Jayson Beaster - Jones examines the overlooked role of background scores in Bollywood, particularly A.R. Rahman's impact on musical storytelling. Additionally, this research article mentions other authors Monia Acciari and Sangeeta Marwah explore song and dance in cross-cultural and diasporic contexts, demonstrating their influence beyond India. Finally, Ajay Gehlawat discusses the rise of end-credit song sequences, while Philip Lutgendorf traces Bollywood's classical dance influences. After reviewing this research article, it mainly concludes that the song and dance remain essential to Hindi cinema, reflecting its dynamic evolution. As Bollywood adapts to changing trends, these elements continue to redefine cinematic storytelling, ensuring their enduring significance. There is no mention to Telugu Cinema in this article but identified different perspectives on research in evolution of Hindi Cinema.

The next book as part of my review is 'Illicit worlds of Dance' by Anna Morcam¹¹. The chapter "The Bollywood Dance revolution and the focusing on the embourgeoisement of classical arts and cinema, which led to the exclusion of hereditary female erotic performers. The shift made classical dance a respectable middle-class pursuit while reforming cinema into a broadly middle-class industry. Bollywood dance, emerging in the 1990s, extends this transformation by embracing sensuality and global aesthetics, challenging earlier norms of de-eroticized performance. Anna also mentions further that historically, female public performers were considered low-status, but from the early 20th century, upper-class women entered classical arts and film, securing respectability. By the late 20th century, Bollywood dance became a mass phenomenon, allowing middle-class women to perform in revealing costumes

¹¹ Anna Morcom. *Illicit Worlds of Indian Dance: Cultures of Exclusion*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013

without social stigma. The liberalization and globalization of the 1990s reinforced this shift, aligning Indian middle-class identity with Western norms. This book further enhances that the Bollywood dance revolution signifies both continuity and transformation. While it maintains the exclusion of traditional erotic performers, it also enables the pre-inclusion of sensuality in performance under new parameters. This paradox—excluding past performers while legitimizing sexuality in dance—reflects broader social shifts in India, where class, gender, and performance continuously evolve, shaping new identities in cinema and culture. The transformation of classical performing arts from a feudal system, where low-status performers entertained high-status patrons, into a bourgeois, middle-class institution was marked by the exclusion of hereditary female performers such as courtesans and devadasis. This shift paralleled the later rise of Bollywood performing arts as a respectable space. A key factor in this transformation was the strict separation of ‘respectable’ and ‘disreputable’ women. The exclusion of courtesans in the 1930s allowed upper-caste women to enter the classical arts without social stigma. Performing arts were also de-eroticized—music and dance were separated, sensual elements like direct eye contact were removed, and religious devotion was emphasized through narratives like Radha-Krishna’s love. This book also mentions that the Institutionalization played a crucial role, with figures like Bhatkhande and Paluskar creating music institutions that aligned classical arts with education, nationalism, and intellectual prestige. These reforms also excluded hereditary female performers, associating them with vulgar entertainment. Government patronage, especially through All India Radio, further reinforced these changes by banning women with ‘public scandals.’ Ultimately, classical performing arts were ‘purified’ and rebranded as symbols of national pride, securing their place in middle-class respectability while distancing themselves from their erotic past. This book majorly focused on the separation of courtesans and devadasis as low-status and not being

considered even in Bollywood cinema and but doesn't help in my research on Dance in Telugu Cinema.

The next article by Chakravorty¹² "Moved to Dance: Remix, Rasa, and a New India ", explores embodiment as a theoretical lens for rethinking how identities and subjectivities are crafted through dance and the dancing body. It begins with an investigation of embodiment through the intellectual frameworks of anthropology, dance studies and postcolonial theory.. As Bollywood dance emerges as the dominant form for many dance practitioners in India and the diaspora, choreography, remix and fusion become buzzwords that sweep across national borders. The article has focused on Bollywood dance to explore the perceptual changes that are producing the technicized, mediatized bodies of a global consumer culture. The influences of the "commodity aesthetics" circulated through Bollywood are not confined to Bollywood dance, but are impacting on classical, folk and contemporary avant-garde forms. She further says "I argue that the body as a locus of experience and expression shifts the ground from culture as text or discourse to embodiment of subjectivity. Moreover, the focus on embodiment can explore how dominant sensibilities are produced that shape discourses of power. I have used embodiment and its relation to habitus and practice to analyse contemporary cultural identity in India. I have also shown how particular practices such as are found in Bollywood dance halls ultimately connect to narratives of desire and social distinction in Bollywood films. My goal has been to write not about the dancing bodies in India, nor for them, but to articulate from them as India forges a new global modernity."

The other article by Chakravorty¹³ is "Lens on Reality: Media, Sensuous Ethnography and New Dance in India". This presentation is based on Chakravorty's ethnographic research

¹² Chakravorty, Pallabi. (2009). Moved to Dance: Remix, Rasa, and a New India. *Visual Anthropology*. 22. 211-228.

¹³ Chakravorty, Pallabi. (2013). Lens on Reality : Media, sensuous Ethnography and New Dance in India

in India among choreographers and reality show dancers for the past several years to explore new forms of subjectivities that are being forged through the interactions of various media technologies such as: cinema, video, YouTube, and television. She investigates how these new technologies interact with traditional visual cultures like dance and ritual. In reference to the two broad yet related themes that she explores within this lecture, Chakravorty says: "First, I look at the broadening of the dance context in urban India due to liberalization of the economy and spread of new media and technology,". Further she says, "the rise of Bollywood dance and Bollywood films - they used to be called filmi dance and Bombay films - is an engine for the new visibility of dance in India and in the global pop-culture. In fact, one could argue that Bollywood dance and Bollywood films are among the most visible products of India's new economy. While dance reality shows in India may be conceptually borrowed from reality shows in the west, I argue that they are deeply grounded in the visual and sensory culture of India and its all-pervasive media apparatus: Bollywood films. My investigation here is concerned with uncovering this indigenous logic by tracing the genealogy of the dance reality show genre from the song and dance sequences of Bombay/Bollywood films and its by product, music videos. This part of the research is enriched by archival work I conducted at the National Film Archives in Pune." After reviewing the book, the researcher could only identify the discussion on the rise of Bombay / Bollywood cinema and its dance and does not identify anything related to Telugu Cinema & its rise.

The paper by Ann A. Bergeron¹⁴ is a basic resource that may be used as an outline for a curricular unit which is intended to be a comprehensive introduction to the Dance of India. Interwoven with the factual, historical, and descriptive material are observations, perceptions,

¹⁴ Ann A. Bergeron, "Jammin' with Shiva: Tradition and transformation of Dance in India", Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminars Abroad, 1997.

and connections based on the author's experience in the Fulbright seminar in India. The conclusions, obviously from a Western perspective, could be used as a starting point for discussion and debate regarding current trends in Indian dance. The paper provides both historical and contemporary information on dance of India. Contains a glossary and a list of: Indian dance resources, audio/visual resources, and teaching materials available in the U.S.A. As per the article, the traditional Indian dance has survived millennia. Its foundation in spiritualism, which is at the heart of the dance forms, assures that it will not disappear as quickly as it has in other changing cultures. Fortunately for a spiritually starving world, there is an art form that allows us to experience an intangible and valuable commodity that we have all but lost. In its many forms, Indian dance brings us back to our most primitive and yet most elevated human instincts. Whether it is in its pure state, or integrated with "universal forms," Indian dance will continue to enthrall and inspire for many generations to come. From the article the title of a work by choreographer Raneem Ramaswamy perhaps best describes Indian dance as: "A Painting in Motion, Whose Poetry Breathes Music."

Indeed.

The dancing foot, the sound of tinkling bells

The songs that are sung and the varying steps

The form assumed by our Dancing Gurupara

Find out these within yourself, then shall your fetters fall away

-Hindu Scriptures

From the book by Anjali Gera Roy¹⁵ et.al., *Travels of Bollywood Cinema: From Bombay to LA*," edited by Anjali Gera Roy and Chua Beng Huat, examines the global journey

¹⁵ Anjali Gera Roy & Chua Beng Huat, "Travels of Bollywood cinema: From Bombay to LA", 2011

of Indian popular cinema over nearly a century, culminating in the Bollywood-inspired, Oscar-winning film "Slumdog Millionaire." This book brings together perspectives from various disciplines and geographical locations to explore how Bollywood has transcended borders, reaching audiences in regions such as British Malaya, Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad, Mauritius, East and South Africa, the former USSR, West Asia, the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australia. The essays delve into themes of nationalism, regionalism, transnationalism, politics, aesthetics, and spectatorship, offering insights into how Bollywood cinema has influenced and been influenced by diverse cultures worldwide.

Usha Iyer's¹⁶ *Dancing Women: Choreographing Corporeal Histories of Hindi Cinema* offers a comprehensive analysis of the pivotal role of female dancers in shaping Hindi cinema from the 1930s to the 1990s. Iyer challenges traditional narratives that often marginalize these performers, instead highlighting their significant contributions both on-screen and behind the scenes. Iyer's work underscores the importance of studying dance and choreography in Indian cinema within postcolonial and cultural studies, offering a nuanced understanding of women's agency and the evolution of performance art in the film industry.

Edited by Urmimala Sarkar Munsî¹⁷ and Stephanie Burridge, *Traversing Traditions: Celebrating Dance in India* (2012) explores the rich and evolving landscape of Indian dance traditions. The book delves into how classical, folk, and contemporary dance forms have transformed over time due to historical, political, and cultural influences. The article in this book examines the institutionalization of classical dances, the impact of globalization and modernity, and the role of gender, identity, and politics in shaping Indian dance traditions. The contributors analyze both traditional forms like Bharatanatyam, Odissi, and Kathak, as well as

¹⁶ Usha Iyer, "Dancing Women: Choreographing Corporeal Histories of Hindi Cinema", 2020.

¹⁷ Sarkar Munsî, Urmimala, and Stephanie Burridge, editors. *Traversing Traditions: Celebrating Dance in India*. Routledge, 2012.

newer, hybrid dance styles that merge Indian and global influences. This article, through case studies and critical essays, explores the negotiation between heritage and innovation in Indian dance, questioning concepts of authenticity, purity, and modern reinterpretation. It also examines the evolving role of dancers, their social status, and how dance continues to serve as a powerful medium of cultural expression in India and beyond."

This book "His Life , His Dance-A portrait of Uday Shankar", by Mohan Khokar¹⁸ provides a comprehensive account of Uday Shankar's life, career, and artistic contributions, capturing his role as a pioneer of modern Indian dance. Written by Mohan Khokar, a renowned dance historian and critic, the book delves into Shankar's journey of blending Indian classical, folk, and Western dance influences to create a new artistic expression. This book describes Uday Shankar's early life, highlighting his background in painting and his initial exposure to Western art forms while studying at the Royal College of Art in London. It changed into at some point of this time that he discovered his ardour for dance, main to his collaboration with mythical ballerina Anna Pavlova, which brought him to the worldwide level. This e-book discusses his innovative method to dance, where he broke far from rigid classical structures and advanced a unique style that combined factors of Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Manipuri, and folk dances with theatrical storytelling. His choreography was marked through its visual grandeur, expressive actions, and an emphasis on Indian mythology and issues. The writer describes the established order of the Uday Shankar Ballet Troupe, thru which he toured Europe, the USA, and India, captivating audiences together with his revolutionary dance productions. His performances were praised for their inventive brilliance and for bringing Indian dance to the global degree in a modern-day layout. This e-book discusses his effect on Indian cinema, particularly through his 1948 movie Kalpana, which showcased dance as a

¹⁸ Mohan Khokar "His Life , His Dance-A portrait of Uday Shankar", 1983

number one storytelling medium. The film remains a landmark in Indian cinematic history, reflecting his visionary thoughts and deep dedication to the combination of dance and film. This book describes the challenges he confronted, which includes monetary difficulties, changing target audience options, and the battle to institutionalize his dance legacy. In spite of those boundaries, he founded the Uday Shankar India Cultural Centre in Almora, which became a hub for schooling young dancers, consisting of future luminaries like Guru Dutt and Zohra Sehgal. Overall, *His Lifestyles, His Dance: A Portrait of Uday Shankar* through Mohan Khokar is an in-depth and insightful tribute to a mythical artist who reshaped Indian dance. It offers precious perspectives on his inventive philosophy, struggles, and lasting effect, making it an crucial examine for dancers, students, and artwork fans.

The article “Bharatanatyam Dancers in Olden Day Cinema” by S. B. Abarna et al. discusses how Tamil Nadu is domestic to the classical dance form Bharatanatyam. Dance has been cited in Tamil texts since the Sangam literature length, approximately 2,000 years in the past. Traditionally, Devadasis performed Bharatanatyam in temples, while Rajadasis performed it in royal courts. The Margam repertoire was structured by the Tanjore Quartet with the support of the Maratha rulers. Even today, the Margam remains the foundation for Bharatanatyam performances. The author discusses how older films also educate audiences by showcasing various forms of Abhinaya. Several renowned Bharatanatyam dancers have gained fame in the film industry. Some of the most notable dancers who transitioned to cinema include the Travancore sisters, Vyjayanthimala, Kumari Kamala, L. Vijayalakshmi, Vennira Aadai Nirmala, M. K. Saroja, E. V. Saroja, Rajasulochana, and Hema Malini. These artists not only brought classical dance into mainstream cinema but also played a crucial role in popularizing Bharatanatyam beyond temple and stage performances.

Murthy CS¹⁹ says that art forms like music, song, and dance play a crucial role in fostering a silent and non-violent social revolution that promotes "inclusiveness" while also bringing harmony to society. This research places the themes of Kasinadhuni Viswanath's (commonly known as K. Viswanath in the Telugu film industry) musicals within modernist and postmodernist cultural perspectives. Viswanath's films are widely recognized for their deep association with India's rich repertoire of dance and music. From this article, it is evident that Viswanath is renowned for his ability to seamlessly integrate dance, song, and music into his narratives. He is celebrated as one of the rarest filmmakers in Indian cinema. His highly acclaimed and award-winning film *Sankarabharanam* (1979) was not only nationally recognized as the best wholesome, entertaining popular film but also presented viable alternatives to eradicate social evils such as caste and economic inequality. Moreover, it challenged myths such as the notion that Western music is superior to Eastern music or that Western life is inherently better than traditional Indian life. His films, including *Saptapadi* (1981), successfully blend dance and music styles with traditional or social themes, fostering national unity in both Telugu and Hindi cinema. The author says that using Kracauer's moving image analysis, this study heuristically examines how Viswanath's musicals employ a "social model" akin to the "Gandhian model" through a unique synthesis of traditional Indian cultural symbols, signs, and philosophical ideas with the art forms of music, song, and dance. Additionally, the study seeks to illustrate how Viswanath constructs conflicts among the Proppian elements in his plots at the modernist level and, through a masterful manipulation of narratives, ultimately resolves these conflicts into solutions that reflect "inclusiveness."

¹⁹ MURTHY, C S. (2014). Inclusiveness through art films in Telugu: A modern to postmodern analysis of K. Viswanath's films. *Dance Movement and Spiritualities*. 1. 413-438. 10.1386/dmas.1.3.413_1.

The Aparna Dhulipala²⁰ says that in all Indian art forms, but especially in dance, the traditional teaching method was oral. With the founding of prestigious dance schools and the institutionalization of systematic, syllabus-oriented instruction, which started in India in the early 20th century, dance education underwent a significant transformation from the traditional *Gurukula Paddhati* in the 20th century. The article describes that the pursuit of research is frequently regarded as the highest form of intellectual learning in the academic community. Even in the scholarly study of dance, this holds true. The main topic of this study is the research projects that different academics investigating Kuchipudi dance have completed and submitted. The author says that this article's scope is restricted to research projects submitted to Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University (PSTU) and the University of Hyderabad (UoH), as well as a few doctoral theses from the diaspora. The article describes that in addition to explaining the diverse themes and shifting trends of the 20th and 21st centuries, this study explores the origins of research on the Kuchipudi dance form. It categorizes different research projects into areas such as critical analysis, historical accounts, narrative, and descriptive studies. The author says that the study highlights the shifts in themes from narrative-based works to in-depth critical investigations while discussing research trends. It argues that a wide range of topics have been explored in research, and that understanding more about the Kuchipudi dance style has helped bridge gaps in traditional learning methods. The article describes that research conducted in institutionalized settings makes Kuchipudi's scientific and empirical knowledge base more accessible, thereby enhancing academic instruction.

²⁰ Aparna Dhulipala, "Changing Approaches in Dance Research with special focus on Kuchipudi", IJARIE- ISSN(O)-2395-4396, Vol-8 Issue-2 2022.

The article by Namrata Bagchi²¹ et.al says that South Indian cinema, often referred to as "Tollywood" or "South Indian cinema," has a rich and distinguished past. This category includes the thriving film industries of several South Indian states, such as Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. The author says that both domestically and abroad, South Indian cinema has enjoyed great success. This study aims to investigate the audience's viewing patterns, production characteristics, and cultural significance of South Indian films. The article says that the study uses both quantitative and qualitative data to provide readers with a comprehensive picture of this flourishing film industry. Some of the most significant films in South Indian cinema, including *Pushpa*, *Minnal Murali*, *KGF Chapter 1 and 2*, and *Ponniyin Selvan 1 and 2*, have been selected for analysis. The author says that the study's findings indicate that a variety of factors—such as captivating content rooted in mythology, history, and rituals; the employment of state-of-the-art visual effects technology; outstanding actors; and captivating narratives—have aided in the expansion of South Indian cinema in support of pan-Indian distribution.

The book *Indian Cinema: Pleasures and Popularity* by Rosie Thomas²², published in *Screen* (Volume 26, Issue 3-4, May-August 1985, Pages 116–131), explores the appeal and cultural significance of Indian popular cinema. It examines how Indian films engage audiences through narrative structures, star performances, music, and spectacle. The study delves into the emotional and visual pleasures that make Indian cinema distinctive, analyzing its unique storytelling techniques and its relationship with spectatorship. Thomas also discusses the

²¹ Namrata Bagchi et.al., "South Indian Cinema: An Analysis Of Production, Consumption And Culture", IJCRT | Volume 12, Issue 1 January 2024 | ISSN: 2320-2882

²² Rosie Thomas, *Indian Cinema: Pleasures and Popularity*, *Screen*, Volume 26, Issue 3-4, May-August 1985, Pages 116–131

influence of social, economic, and historical contexts on the popularity of Indian films, shedding light on the ways they resonate with diverse audiences both within India and globally.

The author, Marisa Zanotti²³, explores how dance is imagined in cinema and how this imagination influences dance practice. She discusses the concept of "disclosure" in dance, emphasizing how cinematic techniques reveal new ways of perceiving movement, space, and choreography. Zanotti examines how filmic elements such as framing, editing, and camera movement contribute to the transformation of dance when captured on screen. The article argues that screen dance, as a hybrid form, extends beyond traditional stage performance by creating new possibilities for dance expression. Zanotti highlights how film technology allows choreographers and filmmakers to reimagine bodily movement, offering fresh perspectives that are not always possible in live performance. She also addresses the relationship between the dancer, the camera, and the audience, suggesting that cinema reshapes the viewer's experience of dance. The author concludes that dance in cinema is not merely a recorded performance but a reimagined art form that merges movement with the language of film. Through this lens, screen dance becomes a distinct practice that both preserves and transforms choreographic intent, ultimately expanding the ways in which dance can be conceptualized and experienced.

Esha Bhattacharya Chatterjee²⁴ in the article says that the Hindi film business, or Bollywood, has its own mysterious world. It is worthwhile to observe the fervor and exhilaration that surround it, both in India and abroad. Bollywood's intricate song-dance scenes, which consistently evoke strong emotions in viewers, are one of its main draws and what sets it apart from Hollywood. The author says that the fact that these songs and dances

²³ Zanotti, Marisa. (2018). When Dance is Imagined In Cinema: Disclosure in Dance Practice. *The International Journal of Screen dance*.

²⁴ Esha Bhattacharya Chatterjee .“Contemporary Bollywood Dance: Analyzing It through the Interplay of Social Forces”,*International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, Volume 6, Issue 6, June 2016

are deeply ingrained in our social fabric is something that is frequently forgotten. It's intriguing to observe this and conduct a study of it. This piece will discuss Bollywood, including how the songs and dances are incorporated into the films. It will analyse the different kinds of dance and their forms in light of the social forces at play—such as "globalization" and "glocalization"—and offer a sociological perspective on its evolving form. The article says that since it would be impossible to include every Bollywood dance, the study has examined the dances that emerged following the globalization era and the 1980s MTV invasion. The author says that the focus is mostly on the dance scenes that won the Filmfare Awards between 1994 and 2013.

The blog²⁵ describes L. Vijayalakshmi as a dimpled and graceful dancer of 1960s Telugu cinema, whose style evolved over time. Initially, the author found her classical film dances too filmy, with exaggerated movements that felt less authentic. Her earliest known film dance in *Neethipathi* (1955) already showcased her talent, but it was in *Renukadevi Mahatyam* (1960) that she truly impressed with sharp, geometric movements. Films like *Kuravanji* (1960) and *Narthanasala* (1963) highlighted her versatility, from synchronized folk performances to Kuchipudi-inspired sequences choreographed by legends like Vempati Pedda Satyam. The article further describes how L. Vijayalakshmi transitioned from a celebrated film dancer to a successful academic and professional. After leaving the film industry in the late 1960s, she pursued higher education, earning degrees in accounting from institutions in India, the Philippines, and the United States. Settling in the U.S. in the early 1990s, she built a career in finance, working at Virginia Tech before moving to California, where she currently serves as

²⁵ Blog on “Film Dances of L. Vijayalakshmi”, 12 January 2014, in Cinema Nritya

a financial analyst at UC Davis. The blog highlights how rare it is to find recent information about classic South Indian film dancers, making Vijayalakshmi's story all the more remarkable.

The blog "The Evolution of choreography in Indian Cinema"²⁶ discusses the evolution of choreography in Indian cinema, highlighting its journey from a simple embellishment in silent films to the grand dance spectacles of contemporary Bollywood. It explores how choreography has adapted to changing times, resonating with audiences both in India and worldwide. The article discusses the seamless blending of traditional Indian dance forms with Western influences, showcasing how Bollywood dance has embraced diverse styles to become a dynamic and influential force in entertainment. It emphasizes how this fusion has contributed to the vibrancy of Indian cinema's choreography, making it a global phenomenon. Furthermore, this article discusses the industry's continuous spirit of innovation and creativity in choreography, which plays a crucial role in shaping the cinematic experience. It suggests that as Indian cinema evolves, dance and choreography will continue to reach new heights of artistic expression, pushing creative boundaries and enchanting audiences worldwide.

The article in blog²⁷ tells the story of Bollywood as the heart of the Indian movie industry, serving as a melting pot of cultural expression and vividly capturing the essence of India's numerous dance traditions. It delves into the profound effect of Bollywood on Indian dance tradition, exploring its ancient roots, evolution, and the tricky interplay between cinema and conventional dance forms.

²⁶ Blog <https://liberalarts.dpu.edu.in/blogs/evolution-choreography-indian-cinema>.

²⁷ Blog from https://socialstudieshelp.com/exploring-bollywoods-impact-on-indian-dance-culture/#google_vignette

The article by yang²⁸ describes art as the embodiment of countrywide tradition and spirit, with making a song and dancing being among the earliest and richest types of human expression. they're now not most effective the product of enjoy and emotional expression however also a transcendence of normal daily existence. because the maximum exceptional function of current Indian films, the artwork of making a song and dancing inherits traditional Indian aesthetic ideas and spiritual philosophy in the modern-day audio-visible surroundings, keeping a unique country wide identification even within the tide of internationalization.

The Dhruba Mukherjee²⁹ describes how the type of Indian cinema into artwork/Parallel cinema is based on a hierarchical distinction that favours Western cinematic language, in particular its realist filmic grammar, over the so-known as "degraded" techniques of industrial cinema, including music and dance. This category implicitly positions art movies as requiring an extra sophisticated, elite city target audience even as relegating commercial cinema and its visitors to a less refined cultural area. any such theoretical framework, the pupil argues, reinforces an elitist and Eurocentric bias in film history, undermining decolonial, postcolonial, and subaltern views on Indian cinema. The thesis proposes a reclassification of Indian films into "artist" and industrial categories based on their socio-political activist capability or business motive, in preference to traditional distinctions of style and fashion. The time period "artist" film signifies a transformative approach, hard hierarchies between excessive and coffee art, city and rural lessons, and elite and subaltern groups at the same time as increasing cinema's function in India. The student emphasizes the importance of recognizing artist movie songs that amplify nearby voices and neglected challenge matters, disrupting Bollywood's dominant narratives. In a time while the Hindutva movement seeks to reshape

²⁸ Yang, Yue & Zhang, Ensi. (2023). Cultural thought and philosophical elements of singing and dancing in Indian films. *Trans/Form/Ação*. 46. 315-328.

²⁹ Dhruba Mukherjee, Ph.D Thesis on "The "Other" Parallel Cinema: Song and Dance in Indian Cinema", 2020.

India's country wide identity by using targeting marginalized corporations, reading film songs as expressions of resistance becomes important in reclaiming cinema as a area for various and suppressed voices.

The article by Shresthova³⁰ the object by using Shresthova describes movie dances, or filmed dance sequences accompanying movie songs, as a crucial a part of popular Indian cinema. over time, Hindi film dance has developed from a simple documentation of overall performance traditions to a reputable dance class emulated in staged performances in India and overseas. regardless of their importance, these dances have no longer been systematically analyzed, leaving their movement, records, cultural impact, and migration largely unexplored. The article raises questions about why these dances became key elements of films, how their production and content have evolved, and how they are received and reinterpreted by audiences outside India. The article aims to establish a framework for analyzing Hindi film dances by examining their connection to Bollywood dance performances at South Asian cultural events. Using a formalist approach, it sets the foundation for studying the cyclical migration of these dances from films to live performances. Most importantly, the article highlights how this perspective helps in understanding "Bollywood dance" as a space where Hindi film dances are reinterpreted and transformed beyond cinema.

As per thesis of Sree Kathyayani thota³¹ Kuchipudi, a dynamic performative art form, has been a subject of interest in historical narratives. However, its mid-twentieth-century interactions with the film industry and its journey to Madras remain underexplored. This study bridges that gap by examining the intricate exchange between Kuchipudi and cinema, highlighting the ways in which elements of both art forms have influenced each other. Drawing

³⁰ Shresthova, Sangita. (2007). *Strictly Bollywood? : story, camera and movement in Hindi film dance*.

³¹ Sree Katyayani thota, Ph.D Thesis on "Stage to screen, and back: A study of Dialogue between Kuchipudi and. Telugu cinema", University of Hyderabad,2016.

on ethnographic experiences, empirical analysis, and existing research, the study delves into the political factors that led to Kuchipudi's emergence as the classical dance form of the Andhra community and its role as the quintessential Telugu dance in the film industry. It traces how Kuchipudi transformed into a symbol of Telugu identity, analyzing the contributions of its gurus, their interactions with cinema, and the cinematic elements that have woven themselves into Kuchipudi's fabric. The study celebrates the pioneering efforts of Vedantam Raghavayya, Vempati Peda Satyam, and Pasumarthy Krishnamurthy, collectively referred to as the celluloid trinity, in bringing Kuchipudi to the silver screen. In this thesis, the scholar mentions Ambā Parāku, a traditional Kuchipudi invocatory composition praising Balatripurasundari, an incarnation of Goddess Parvathy, serves as a key example of the interaction between Kuchipudi and Telugu cinema. Its music was later featured in the celebrated film Mayabazar, demonstrating the dialogue between these two forms. This talk can be traced back to the first Telugu film, Mayabazar, made in 1936, and includes three prominent hereditary Kuchipudi families: Vedantam Raghavayya (1919–1971), Vempati Satyanarayana (1922–1979), and Pasumarthy Krishnamurthy (1927–2004). moreover, 11 films across Indian languages have been based at the topic of Sasirekha Parinayam, with one being a silent movie. Vedantam Ramakrishnayya, a famous actor from a Kuchipudi own family, portrayed Harischandra in a yakshagānam of the equal call. The contributions of Vempati Satyanarayana, Vempati Chinna Satyam, and others from those households exemplify how hereditary Kuchipudi artists used cinema as a innovative platform. In this article it describes the artists including Vedantam Raghavayya, Vempati Chinna Satyam, Vedantam Jagannatha Sarma, and Vedantam Rattayya Sarma played pivotal roles within the Telugu film enterprise, predominantly as experts and choreographers. Mahankali Venkayya, a hereditary Kuchipudi artiste, made his mark as a individual actor. in spite of diverse interactions between Kuchipudi and cinema, essential evaluation of dance sequences has simplest these days gained attention. The author says

Kuchipudi has evolved thru numerous genres, every with awesome choreography and issues. Initially, its repertoire included *Bhamakalapam*, later adapted into *Gollakalapam*. This evolution reflects the adaptation of Telugu literary genres into performance art during the late nineteenth century. Siddhendra Yogi is credited with creating *Bhamakalapam*, now synonymous with Kuchipudi. The *Yakshagāna* genre, introduced by Hari Madhavayya in the mid-nineteenth century, further diversified Kuchipudi. This genre was influenced by the Parsi theatre, which revolutionized Indian entertainment with its European stagecraft and hybrid music forms. Kuchipudi artists participated in Parsi theatre, integrating its musical and theatrical elements into their performances. However, the popularity of professional drama companies posed a challenge to the traditional *Kalāpam* performances of Kuchipudi. In one of the chapter in the thesis, she discusses the Prominent figures such as Vempati Venkatanarayana (1871–1932) maintained the *Kalāpam* tradition, even as the *Yakshagāna* gained momentum in Kuchipudi's repertoire. The genre flourished through the creative contributions of Chinta Venkataratnam and Chinta Venkataramayya, who adapted *Yakshagāna* plots from Hindu mythology into Kuchipudi's idiom. Chinta Venkataramayya's eight *Yakshagānams*, presented by the Venkatarama Natya Mandali, marked a significant evolution in the art form. Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry (1886–1956) further innovated Kuchipudi by introducing solo and duet performances, departing from traditional group presentations. His repertoire drew inspiration from female dance traditions of Telugu and Tamil regions and pan-Indian trends. Sastry integrated dance elements from *Sadir* and *Mejuvāni*, creating a "solo" performance culture for Kuchipudi. He also incorporated unconventional dance pieces and multilingual songs, broadening Kuchipudi's scope. In her thesis she mentions the advent of cinema expanded Kuchipudi's performance culture beyond its village roots. The art form resonated with cinematic influences, integrating elements from Parsi theatre, *Yakshagāna*, *Sadir*, *Mejuvāni*, and Uday Shankar's dance innovations. Between 1939 and 1969, Kuchipudi

underwent significant transformations, becoming a gender-inclusive, classical dance form representing the "*Telugu Jāti*." This period marked the inclusion of artists from diverse castes and classes, making Kuchipudi accessible to both men and women. The "Subaltern Moment" of Kuchipudi's revival began with the 1958 "classicism controversy" at the All-India Dance Seminar in New Delhi. Kuchipudi's exclusion from classical dance forms led to the establishment of Siddhendra Kalakshetra in Hyderabad and the institutionalization of Kuchipudi training. Vempati Chinna Satyam, based in Madras, pioneered the dance-drama genre, elevating Kuchipudi's stature with productions like *Ksheerasagaramadhanam*. His Kuchipudi Art Academy in Madras introduced "Madras Kuchipudi," a new dialect of the dance form. This study of Katyayani focuses on Kuchipudi's mid-twentieth-century transformations, particularly its cinematic interactions. Despite extensive research on Kuchipudi's origins, evolution, and performative aspects, its sociological dimensions and interactions with other performance traditions remain underexplored. While genres like *Kalāpam*, *Yakshagānam*, solo, and dance-drama have been studied, there is limited discourse on Kuchipudi's integration into Telugu cinema. Rumya Putcha stands out as a scholar who has extensively analyzed Kuchipudi artists' contributions to cinema.

Our thesis differs significantly from this study by focusing on the broader evolution of dance in Telugu cinema. While this work highlights Kuchipudi's role within cinema, our research examines the interplay of various dance forms and their transformative impact on Telugu films. This distinction underscores the unique scope and contributions of our study in understanding the multifaceted evolution of dance in the Telugu film industry.

Research Methodology

The method for this thesis will appoint a qualitative research technique grounded in film research, archival research, and interviews with industry professionals. the point of interest

will be on expertise how dance in Telugu cinema has advanced over the years, exploring the transitions in choreography, overall performance patterns, and cultural impacts through a aggregate of comparative analysis and ethnographic methods.

Qualitative Analysis:

Movie research:

A close evaluation of key Telugu movies across several many years can be primary to expertise the evolution of dance sequences. this can contain examining visual and narrative factors in movies that feature iconic dance performances, figuring out how choreography serves the broader narrative or cultural context. special interest may be given to the choreography, style, execution, and the way it aligns with or subverts conventional and modern norms.

Archival Pictures:

Archival materials (which includes movie reels, recordings, and promotional substances) may be examined to hint dance patterns' evolution, specifically searching on the progression of choreography, dance strategies, and the usage of space and frame movement. This statistics will help identify the creation of recent dance techniques or the fusion of styles over the years.

Interviews with Enterprise Specialists:

Interviews could be carried out with choreographers, dancers, filmmakers, and different enterprise professionals within the Telugu movie enterprise to recognize their views on the changing nature of dance in cinema. these interviews will provide essential insights into the have an effect on of outside elements (together with Western tendencies, Global Influences, or

local traditions) on the choreography, and how those traits have formed the dance paperwork in Telugu films.

Comparative Analysis:

Examine movies across decades:

The number one intention could be to evaluate dance sequences from one-of-a-kind a long time to identify developments, shifts, and transitions in dance styles and choreography. as an instance, early Telugu cinema would possibly have a extra emphasis on classical dance paperwork like Bharatanatyam or Kuchipudi, while later many years would possibly see an infusion of Western dance patterns including jazz, hip hop, or modern-day dance, regularly thru Bollywood have an effect on. this could allow for an knowledge of the way changing sociopolitical, cultural, and global contexts have affected dance in cinema.

Identification of Transitions:

The comparative analysis will seek to discover key moments or movies that mark transitions in the history of Telugu cinema dance. this could consist of innovations in choreography, the upward thrust of particular choreographers, or the impact of large technological advancements like sound recording and visual consequences, which changed how dance may be captured and presented on display screen.

Sampling techniques:

On this research method, the sampling techniques could be designed to make sure that the information collected efficiently represents the evolution of dance in Telugu cinema over time. since the examine mostly specializes in qualitative strategies, the purpose is to select specific samples which can provide targeted insights into the changing nature of dance within

this cinematic context. underneath are the precise sampling strategies for the study, tailor-made to the extraordinary data series methods described inside the technique

Sampling for Film Studies:

- Purposeful Sampling (Criterion Sampling): For the analysis of iconic dance sequences from Telugu cinema, purposeful sampling will be used. This involves selecting films based on specific criteria, such as their historical significance, prominence of dance sequences, or representation of certain dance styles (classical, folk, or contemporary).
 - Example: Early Telugu films (1930s-1950s) featuring classical dance forms like Bharatanatyam or Kuchipudi may be sampled to represent the pre-modern era, while films from later decades (1980s-2000s) showcasing Bollywood-inspired dances or hip hop may represent the more recent trends.
- Film Selection Criteria: Films will be selected from various decades to ensure a chronological representation. These will include landmark films, those featuring choreographers known for shaping Telugu film dance, and films that have received significant attention for their dance sequences.
- Stratified Sampling: Stratified sampling will also be applied within the selection of films, ensuring diversity in terms of genres (e.g., action, romance, historical, etc.) to study how dance sequences differ across thematic contexts.

Sampling for Archival Research:

- Purposive Sampling of Archival Materials: Archival footage, film reels, recordings, and promotional materials will be sampled purposively to trace the evolution of dance styles. The focus will be on key periods in Telugu cinema, such as the advent of sound in cinema, the rise of playback singing, and the advent of modern visual effects. The

selected materials will offer a comprehensive view of dance styles over time, and archival data will be specifically chosen for its relevance to the research question.

- Example: Specific decades or periods in Telugu cinema will be targeted, such as the 1950s to the 1970s for early classical and folk influences or the 1990s for the rise of fusion and Western dance elements.

Sampling for Interviews with Industry Experts:

- Purposive (Expert) Sampling: Industry experts such as choreographers, dancers, filmmakers, and historians of Telugu cinema will be purposively sampled based on their experience, influence, and involvement in significant dance sequences or trends in the industry. The sampling will focus on experts who have worked across multiple decades or who have witnessed major changes in choreography and dance styles in Telugu films.
 - Example: Interviews conducted with prominent choreographers like Tarun, Brunda, Chinni Prakash, Suchitra Chandrabose, or veteran film directors and producers known for their involvement in dance-heavy projects.
- Snowball Sampling: Snowball sampling may also be employed to identify additional experts through referrals. Once initial interviews are conducted, may analyse other influential figures or lesser-known experts whose insights may provide valuable perspectives on the evolution of dance in the industry.

Data Collection Methods:

Data collection will be divided into two main categories: primary sources and secondary sources.

Primary Sources: Interviews with Key Industry Figures: Conversations with prominent choreographers, dancers, and filmmakers from the Telugu film industry will be conducted.

These interviews will focus on the creative process behind dance sequences, the challenges faced by choreographers in incorporating dance into storytelling, and how the film industry has responded to or influenced trends in dance.

Firsthand Analysis of Iconic Dance Sequences: A selection of iconic dance sequences from Telugu cinema will be closely analysed. This analysis will involve detailed scrutiny of the choreography, music, scene, costume design, and their narrative significance. Some films to be considered might include those that feature standout dance performances or demonstrate notable choreography.

Observations from Live Performances and Dance Rehearsals: To understand the practical aspects of choreography and performance, fieldwork will be done by observing live dance performances and rehearsals. This will allow the researcher to observe the physical demands of choreography, the interaction between dancers, choreographers, and filmmakers, and the technical processes involved in creating dance scenes for film.

Secondary Sources:

Books and Articles on Indian Cinema and Choreography: Scholarly books, articles, and essays on Indian cinema, especially those focused on the Telugu film industry, will provide a historical and cultural context for understanding the evolution of dance on screen. This will include works that discuss the relationship between dance and storytelling, the role of music in film dance, and the history of Indian classical and folk dance.

Journals and Research Papers on Cultural Significance: Research papers and journal articles that discuss the broader cultural significance of dance in Indian cinema, particularly in the context of Telugu films, will be reviewed. These sources will help to contextualize dance within societal norms, exploring how dance in film reflects or challenges cultural expectations.

Online Databases for films and Choreographic Documentation: on-line movie information, databases, and structures like IMDb, Filmfare, and others can be applied to get admission to filmographies, manufacturing notes, and choreographic credits. this may help in identifying key movies and choreographers which have contributed to the evolution of dance in Telugu cinema.

Information evaluation strategies:

The evaluation will take a multifaceted approach, categorizing dance sequences with the aid of different factors inclusive of decade, thematic content material, and the kind of affect obtrusive in the choreography.

Categorization of Dance Sequences: Dance sequences will be categorized by decade to identify chronological trends. For example, early Telugu films (1930s-1950s) might have more classical dance influences, while films from the 1980s to 2000s could show a shift towards more commercial and popular dance styles. Dance sequences will also be categorized by theme, such as romantic dances, folk dances, or action-based choreography, to understand how different genres of film influenced the dance styles.

Influences like classical (e.g., Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi), folk (e.g., Garba, Lavani), and Western (e.g., ballet, jazz, hip hop) will be used as categories to map the origin and integration of diverse dance forms into Telugu cinema.

Mapping Key Events:

Technological Innovations: The introduction of sound in cinema (e.g., playback singing) and the evolution of film editing techniques will be explored to understand their impact on dance. For example, advancements in sound recording allowed for the more intricate synchronization of choreography with music, while the rise of CGI effects in recent years has opened up possibilities for incorporating dance in highly stylized and imaginative ways.

Key Films and Choreographers: Specific films or choreographers will be mapped as significant turning points in dance history.

Changes in Performance Spaces: The spatial dynamics of dance sequences will be examined. Early films often had simple stage like settings, whereas modern Telugu cinema integrates dynamic choreography within expansive outdoor or digital settings.

Presentation:

The findings can be supplied in a visually attractive and clean way to spotlight the evolution of dance in Telugu cinema.

Chronological Depiction: a visible timeline may be created to expose the evolution of dance in Telugu movies from its early days to the prevailing. This timeline will function stills, videos, and key dates to mark pivotal moments inside the history of film dance.

Comparative Charts: visible charts will examine the have an effect on of classical vs. cutting-edge dance paperwork, highlighting the intersections of various dance traditions in Telugu cinema. for example, a chart should show how dance choreography inside the Nineteen Eighties movies differed in terms of classical influences in comparison to the 2000s, whilst more present day and Western dance paperwork became prominent.

Iconic Dance Sequences: decided on dance sequences will be presented and analyzed via stills, video clips, and narrative descriptions to show off how specific styles evolved in terms of complexity, technique, and impact.

This methodological framework will permit the thesis to offer an in depth and complete evaluation of the evolving function of dance in Telugu cinema, making connections between artistic practices, cultural shifts, and industry dynamics.

Chapterization

The primary chapter gives a short introduction to bounce in Telugu cinema, outlining the goals of the examine, the key studies inquiries to be addressed, a evaluate of relevant literature, and the research methodologies followed.

The second chapter makes a speciality of the ancient perspective of dance in Telugu cinema, exploring its origins, the cultural, social, and ancient effects on its development.

The third chapter examines the evolution of dance in Telugu cinema, detailing its progression and the elements contributing to its boom and transformation.

The fourth chapter discusses the transitions and transformations of dance in Telugu cinema, analysing substantial adjustments in style, presentation, and audience notion through the years.

The thesis concludes with a complete discussion summarizing the findings of dance transitions and transformations in Telugu cinema.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF DANCE IN TELUGU CINEMA

The interrelationship among cinema and dance in India is each complex and dynamic. Inside the realm of Telugu cinema, dance occupies a imperative function no longer merely as a ornamental element however as a effective cultural and narrative device. This chapter ambitions to trace the ancient evolution of dance in Telugu films, analyzing how its form, feature, and aesthetics have transformed over the many years. It seeks to contextualise dance as a cinematic language that now not handiest displays inventive sensibilities but additionally embodies social, cultural, and political dimensions of Telugu society. via a chronological and thematic exploration, the bankruptcy analyses how classical roots, people traditions, and global impacts have intersected in shaping the choreography and visual expression of dance on the Telugu display screen..

Understanding the Historical Context

Our records of Indian Cinema starts in 1896 when the Lumiere Brothers showcased their pioneering movies in Mumbai, known as Bombay at the time. those initial screenings marked the start of cinema in India, fascinating audiences with the magic of moving pics. but, records became certainly created while Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatavdekar, additionally called keep Dada, ordered a camera from England. save Dada's first movie, 'The Wrestlers,' captured a simple wrestling healthy in Mumbai's hanging Gardens in 1899. This momentous event is considered the first movement picture in the Indian film industry.

The actual turning factor within the evolution of Indian cinema came with Dadasaheb Phalke, who's broadly seemed because the pioneer of Indian filmmaking. In 1913, he created 'Raja Harishchandra', which holds the distinction of being the first complete-length Indian characteristic film. although it turned into a silent movie, it achieved extraordinary commercial

success and showcased the rising talent in Indian cinematic storytelling. Dadasaheb Phalke undertook numerous duties during the film's manufacturing, appearing as the director, author, cinematographer, editor, make-up artist, and art fashion designer. His movie received international interest as well and turned into even screened in London in 1914, marking a widespread milestone. but, despite this promising begin, the improvement of Indian cinema progressed at a extra sluggish pace as compared to the speedy growth visible in Hollywood.

The Nineteen Twenties marked a significant phase in Indian cinema with the upward thrust of several movie production businesses. during this period, movies rooted in mythological and ancient narratives have been especially popular among Indian audiences. on the identical time, Hollywood motion films also located a devoted viewership in India, reflecting a growing interest in global cinema. This decade played a essential function in shaping the destiny of Bollywood, laying a robust groundwork for its eventual increase and affect within the years to come.

A prime milestone in Indian cinema was carried out in 1931 with the release of *Alam Ara*, directed via Ardeshir Irani. This landmark movie turned into the primary Indian talkie, introducing synchronized sound to Indian audiences for the primary time. The inclusion of songs, specially the memorable "De de khuda ke naam par" sung via W.M. Khan, added a sparkling and tasty dimension to storytelling on screen. the arrival of sound sparked a rapid growth inside the enterprise even as only 108 films have been produced in 1927, the number surged to 328 films via 1931. With this growth, cinema halls began to increase, and a far larger target market base emerged, firmly organising film as a famous medium of amusement throughout the country.



PhotoCourtesy: https://www.reddit.com/r/bollywood/comments/xkkejm/alamara_indias_first_talkie_is_considered_the/

Plate - 2.1: Indias First Perfect Talkie movie “*Alam-Ara*”

Inside the history of Indian Cinema, the submit-independence duration, around 1947, witnessed a enormous transformation in Indian cinema. Filmmakers like Satyajit Ray and Bimal Roy centered on societal issues, highlighting the struggles of the decrease class. issues together with prostitution, dowry, and polygamy got here to the forefront. within the Sixties, administrators like Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen persisted to deal with real-global issues, gaining international popularity.

Inside the initial a long time of Indian cinema, dance emerged as a effective device of expression, drawn from the USA's deep reservoirs of classical, devotional, and folks performance traditions. Early silent movies frequently featured mythological narratives in which gestures and physicality borrowed from paperwork like Bharatanatyam and Kathak had been used to carry feelings, laying the groundwork for dance as a visual language. With the advent of sound within the Nineteen Thirties, in particular via *Alam Ara* (1931), dance sequences began to be choreographed alongside songs, making them vital to the cinematic revel in. As Indian society modernized, cinema began absorbing international cultural factors. The Fifties and 60s witnessed a growing fascination with Western popular lifestyle, and global

icons like Elvis Presley—whose rock-and-roll power and hip-swaying air of mystery redefined overall performance—left an indelible mark on Indian movie heroes. Actors like Dev Anand and Shammi Kapoor followed Western dance styles, blending them with Indian sensibilities to create a new cinematic idiom. This cross-cultural fusion set the degree for regional cinemas to increase their personal method to bounce. In Telugu cinema, dance started out to gain prominence slightly later, to start with rooted in devotional and mythological topics that reflected classical aesthetics. but, with the aid of the Nineteen Fifties and 60s, Telugu filmmakers and choreographers started crafting a awesome style that combined classical rigor with cinematic aptitude, stimulated by way of both indigenous traditions and pan-Indian as well as Western cinematic trends. This marked the beginning of a vibrant dance way of life specific to Telugu cinema, one that would preserve to adapt in talk with changing inventive and social landscapes.

To absolutely recognize the contemporary panorama of dance in Telugu cinema, it is vital to delve into its historical trajectory. The transformation of dance from being a ritualistic and non-secular art shape to becoming an vital part of mass amusement well-known shows the wider shifts in cultural narratives, audience expectancies, and cinematic practices. As Leela Venkataraman notes, "the adventure of classical dance paperwork into cinematic expression is one of both continuity and change". This observation holds specifically proper in the Telugu context, wherein classical dance traditions like Kuchipudi and Andhra Natyam laid a robust basis for early movie choreography all through the early a long time of Telugu cinema, dance turned into largely an extension of traditional performance arts, especially in mythological and devotional movies. These movies often featured long, expressive dance sequences that had been deeply rooted in classical vocabulary. over the years, but, shifts in socio-political contexts, expanded urbanization, and exposure to worldwide media added about large modifications within the manner dance changed into perceived and finished in cinema. The emergence of

commercial cinema within the Nineteen Eighties and Nineteen Nineties added new aesthetics starting from folks to Western dance styles main to the hybridization of choreography that defines modern Telugu films.

Sunil Kothari , in his seminal paintings *Kuchipudi* (2001), highlights how the stylization of traditional dance forms into cinematic grammar required cautious negotiation between authenticity and entertainment. This balancing act keeps to outline dance sequences in modern-day Telugu movies, where choreographers frequently combo classical mudras with cinematic spectacle to cater to evolving audience tastes.

Telugu cinema, popularly known as Tollywood, is certainly one of India's maximum prolific and culturally rooted movie industries. Originating inside the Nineteen Thirties, Telugu movies have lengthy served as a cultural reflect reflecting the values, aspirations, and contradictions of Telugu-speaking groups. S.V. Srinivas argues that "Telugu cinema isn't always merely a website of entertainment but a cultural organization that negotiates with subculture, modernity, and nearby identity". within this cultural negotiation, dance plays a essential function not best improving narrative enchantment however also maintaining and remodelling cultural reminiscence. Whether in the devotional dance-dramas of early cinema, the grandeur of *Sankarabharanam* (1979), or the stylized performances of stars like Allu Arjun in recent years, dance in Telugu cinema has consistently adapted to the pulse of changing times. It remains a vital expressive mode through which filmmakers communicate emotion, culture, and ideology to a wide and diverse audience.

Pre-Cinematic Dance Traditions in Andhra Pradesh

Before the emergence of cinema in Andhra Pradesh, the region boasted a vibrant tapestry of classical and folk dance traditions deeply embedded in religious, social, and cultural life. These traditions laid the foundational aesthetics for what would later be adapted and transformed in Telugu cinema. Originating from the village of Kuchipudi in Krishna district,

Kuchipudi is one of the eight recognized classical dance forms of India. It was traditionally performed by male Brahmin performers known as *Bhagavatulu* in a dance-drama format (*Yakshagana*), often in temples and as part of religious rituals. Kuchipudi blends *Natya* (drama), *Nritya* (expressive dance), and *Nritta* (pure dance), emphasizing storytelling through graceful movements, hand gestures (*mudras*), and expressive facial expressions (*abhinaya*).



Photo Courtesy: <https://disco.teak.fi/asia/yakshagana-gorgeous-dance-opera-from-karnataka/>
Plate - 2.2 : Outdoor *Yakshagana* performance

Yashoda Sarma's³² "*Andhra Natyam: A Classical Dance Tradition of Andhra Pradesh*" (2005) explores the ancient, female-led, classical dance form of Andhra Pradesh, known as Andhra Natyam, and its revival in the 1970s. A temple dance tradition performed by female dancers in the temples of Andhra Pradesh, *Andhra Natyam* was primarily a solo performance dedicated to deities. The style became less visible during colonial rule but has seen efforts toward revival. Its aesthetic is close to Bharatanatyam but has distinct regional characteristics.

³² Sarma, Yashoda. Author of *Andhra Natyam: A Classical Dance Tradition of Andhra Pradesh*, 2005



Photo Courtesy : https://www.indianetzone.com/andhra_natyam

Plate - 2.3: Andhra Natyam

Lambadi is a vibrant folk dance of the Lambadi/Banjara community, marked by colourful costumes and rhythmic movements. It reflects the nomadic culture and is performed during festivals and social gatherings. While not classical in structure, its energetic patterns have inspired several cinematic dance numbers, especially in rural narratives.

As per author³³ Ramakrishna was the first person who speaks fluently about dance and its terminology, tradition, repertoire etc. He is the doyen of Andhra Natyam. He is known for his work in the areas of dance Andhra Natyam, Kuchipudi, Perini Siva Tandavam and temple traditions. He wrote many books on temple dances, dances forms and its traditions. His devotion towards Lord Shiva and Shaivagama traditions influenced and made him to innovate and revoke new dance traditions. And the way of investigation to find out the vanished art

³³Vakkala Rama krishna, "Nataraja Rama Krishna's contribution: Perini SivaTandavam", IJARIE, 2017

forms shows his dedication towards dance. He spent his whole life in digging out these traditions and giving high esteem to the art forms.

Perini Nritya had been extensively practiced under Desi form of dance in the medieval period. The dancer who performs this dance is called 'Peranin'. Peranin smears ash all over his body and head to be cleanly shorn except for a small tuft of hair. He should have a good command of tala and laya elements of dancing besides a melodious singer. He should tie bells around shanks and perform. Its main rasa is Hasya Rasa. Known as the "Warrior Dance," *Perini Siva Tandavam* was performed by male warriors before going to battle. Rooted in Shaivism, it is a vigorous and devotional dance that evokes the cosmic dance of Lord Shiva. The dance form saw revival efforts led by Guru Nataraja Ramakrishna in the 20th century.



Photo Courtesy : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perini_Sivatandavam
Plate - 2.4: Perini dancers performing *Shiva Tandavam*

Temple Dance Traditions and Classical Roots

Dance was an integral part of temple rituals and community festivals in pre-modern Andhra society. Temples served as cultural hubs where dance, music, and drama flourished.

Dancers known as *Devadasis* in some regions performed ritual dances that were spiritual offerings to deities. These practices preserved the classical idioms that would later influence film choreography. The stylization of *abhinaya*, musical compositions, and costume design in classical dance found its way into Telugu cinema, particularly during the early mythological film era. Not to be confused with the Karnataka variant, Andhra *Yakshagana* is a dance-drama form combining dialogue, music, and stylized dance. It was a significant precursor to narrative performance in early Telugu films as told by S V Joga rao³⁴. As per author³⁵ a folk narrative performance involving singing, storytelling, and rhythmic footwork. While it focused more on storytelling, performers often used simple dance movements to emphasize narrative points, contributing to the evolution of cinematic item songs and duet sequences.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.etvbharat.com/te/!state>

Plate - 2.4: *Burra Katha* Performance

Performed in open-air settings, *Veedhi Natakam* used exaggerated gestures, loud dialogue delivery, and stylized movements that blurred the lines between drama and dance. Elements of this folk tradition shaped early comic and dramatic sequences in Telugu cinema.

³⁴ SV Joga Rao, Andhra Yakshagana Vangmaya Charitra

³⁵ Reddy, P.V. Folk performing Arts of Andhra Pradesh, 1990



Photo Courtesy: <https://prod-appfeeds.intoday.in/magazine/society-and-the-arts/story/19820215-veedhi-natakam-still-remains-the-live-entertainment-form-in-rural-andhra-pradesh-771438-2013-10-18>

Plate - 2.6 : Photo of *Veedi Natakam*

Dance in Silent Film Era (1910s-1930s)

The Silent Era of Indian cinema, spanning from the 1890s to the 1920s, laid the foundational stones for the country's film industry. The journey began in 1896, when the moving pictures by Lumière Brothers and Robert Paul were screened in London, sparking global fascination with cinematography. This interest soon reached India, and in 1897, a film presentation by Professor Stevenson was held in Calcutta, marking one of the earliest public screenings. In 1898, Hiralal Sen filmed scenes from a stage production, resulting in *The Flower of Persia*, one of the earliest recorded Indian films. A year later, in 1899, H. S. Bhatavdekar created *The Wrestlers*, recognized as the first film shot by an Indian. This pioneering phase culminated in a historic moment in 1913, when Dadasaheb Phalke released *Raja Harishchandra* in Bombay, the first full-length Indian feature film, firmly establishing the roots of Indian cinema and earning Phalke the title of the Father of Indian Cinema.

The silent film era was a time when films did not have any recorded sound or spoken dialogues. Everything had to be shown through visuals mainly through expressions, gestures, and movement. This was the beginning stage of Indian cinema, and Telugu films were just starting to take shape. Dance was not fully developed in these films as we see today, but movement and expressions similar to dance played an important role in telling the story. *Keechaka Vadham* (English: The Extermination of Keechaka) alternatively spelt as Keechaka

Vatham, is an Indian silent film produced, directed, filmed and edited by R. Nataraja Mudaliar. The film is based on an episode from the Hindu epic Mahabharata focusing on the characters Kichaka and Draupadi; it stars Raju Mudaliar as Keechaka and Jeevarathnam as Draupadi, the female lead.

Keechaka Vadham was the first silent film made in South India. The film was shot in five weeks at Nataraja Mudaliar's studio, India Film Company. Despite being a silent film, the cast members were from Tamil Nadu, hence it was also considered the first Tamil film. *Keechaka Vadham* received critical acclaim upon its release and went on to become a commercially successful venture. The film's success prompted Nataraja Mudaliar to make a series of similar historical films. Because no print of the film is known to survive, this makes it a lost film.



Photo Courtesy : <https://www.facebook.com/100076680431264/posts/1792238777452891/>
Plate - 2.7 : Shooting of silent films by Nataraja Mudaliar

In the Telugu region, before cinema arrived, dance dramas and stage performances were already popular. Forms like Kuchipudi and Bhagavata Mela were well-known in villages and towns. These performances combined singing, acting, and dancing to tell stories from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and *Bhagavatam*. Many early film directors and writers were inspired by these live dramas when they started making films.

Since there was no sound in early cinema, filmmakers used body movements, face expressions, and stylized gestures (like those seen in classical dances) to show emotions such as happiness, anger, fear, or devotion. These expressions were based on traditional abhinaya a key part of

Indian dance, especially in Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam. Although full dance sequences were not filmed due to lack of background music or audio recording, the influence of dance could be clearly seen in the way actors moved. These were semi-dance movements or dramatic gestures inspired by stage performances. For example, a character playing Lord Krishna might do a hand gesture (mudra) to show holding a flute this was drawn from dance traditions.

According to film historians Barnouw and Krishnaswamy³⁶ (1980), early Indian films were strongly influenced by theatre and dance traditions. They point out that many of the first films used stylized acting, which included movements from traditional Indian art forms.

The first Telugu film believed to be made was *Bhakta Prahlada* in 1919 by R. S. Prakash. Sadly, no copy of this film exists today it is considered a lost film. However, it was based on a stage play that had music, dance, and devotional storytelling. It is believed that actors in the film used dramatic and expressive body movements, like those in Kuchipudi dance dramas, to convey the story of Prahlada and Lord Narasimha.

Even though the technology did not support recorded music, many silent film screenings had live musicians who played in the background during the film. This allowed some scope for movement and rhythm, even if it wasn't traditional dance as we understand it today. Dance in this era was more spiritual and symbolic. Instead of being elaborate performances with group choreography or cinematic spectacle, the dance was part of character expression. Especially in mythological and devotional films, movements borrowed from temple dances helped to show bhakti rasa (emotion of devotion) and moral values.

As Narwekar³⁷ (2005) notes, even in Hindi silent films of this period, actors used dance-like movements to mimic emotional states or perform comic scenes. In Telugu films, the focus was more on devotional themes, which used gestures similar to traditional classical dances.

³⁶ Barnouw, E., & Krishnaswamy, S. (1980). *Indian Film*. Oxford University Press.

³⁷ Narwekar, S. (2005). *Eena Meena Deeka: The Story of Hindi Film Comedy*. Rupa Publications

By the end of the 1920s, technology began to change. Sound recording was being introduced, and filmmakers started thinking about how music and dance could be better used in films. When *Bhakta Prahlada* was remade in 1931 as the first Telugu talkie, it included full-fledged dance performances inspired by Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam styles. Thus, the silent era created the foundation for cinematic dance. It showed how expressive movements and traditional acting styles, based on classical dance and folk drama, could be used in storytelling. These early ideas shaped the way cinematic dance developed in Telugu films after sound was introduced.

Talkie Era and Mythological Films (1930s–1940s)

The formative years of Telugu cinema witnessed the seamless integration of classical Indian dance traditions into the cinematic narrative, particularly through devotional and mythological storytelling. The period from the 1930s to the 1950s laid the foundation for the visual language of dance in Telugu films and contributed significantly to the preservation and popularization of traditional art forms.

Telugu cinema originated with *Bhakta Prahlada*³⁸ (1931), directed by H. M. Reddy, which holds the distinction of being the first Telugu talkie film. As a mythological film rooted in the *Puranic* tradition, it included devotional songs and stylized movement sequences that were influenced by stage theatre and classical dance practices. While the technical limitations of the time restricted elaborate dance choreography, the inclusion of musical storytelling hinted at the crucial role that dance would soon play in cinematic narratives.

³⁸ S.V . Srinivas, *Telugu Cinema: A cultural history* , 2013



Photo Courtesy :

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2723874077899512&id=1395260657427534&set=a.1395431170743816>

Plate - 2.8 : Image from *Bhaktaprahlada* Movie (1931)

During this era, classical dance was adapted for the screen primarily through static shots, long takes, and theatrical presentation of *abhinaya* (expressive acting) and *mudras* (hand gestures). Dance sequences were often derived from Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam, though performed in a more restrained style suited for the early camera work. The *Bhagavata Mela* tradition, closely related to Kuchipudi, also influenced early choreographic approaches as said by Sunil Kothari³⁹. Directors often cast trained classical dancers or theatre artists for dance roles to ensure authenticity. Mythological themes provided the perfect canvas for showcasing divinely inspired dance performances, contributing to the visual grandeur of the narrative.

Devotional and mythological cinema⁴⁰ dominated the 1930s and 1940s, with films such as *Seeta Kalyanam* (1934), *Lava Kusa* (1934), and *Dakshayagnam* (1938) including songs and symbolic dances to convey religious themes. Dance became a sacred spectacle often seen in scenes where gods, goddesses, or celestial beings performed. These sequences helped transition classical dance from temples and courts into the cinematic space. The main change in this era was that complete dance sequences could now be shown on screen with background music. Earlier, during the silent film era, there was no way to synchronize movement and sound. But now, actors could dance in rhythm with the music, and editors could cut between close-ups and full shots to highlight the grace and expression of dancers.

³⁹ Sunil Kothari, Kuchipudi: Indian Classical Dance Art

⁴⁰ Venkatraman Leela, Indian Classical dance: Tradition in transition ,2015

These dance scenes were not just for entertainment. They helped tell the story. For example:

- A devotee dancing in praise of the deity showed spiritual intensity.
- An apsara performing in heaven showed beauty and divine charm.
- A mother dancing with her children expressed joy or sorrow (as in *Lava Kusha*).

As film scholar Rachel Dwyer⁴¹ (2006) points out, dance in mythological films created a sacred atmosphere and helped the audience emotionally connect with the divine. This period helped establish the idea that dance in cinema can carry deep meaning not just visual appeal. Many of the early actors in mythological films had a background in classical dance or theatre. Their education helped them perform sleek, expressive actions on display screen. Dance changed into choreographed with the aid of educated professionals like Vedantam Raghavaiah, a Kuchipudi performer who later have become a well-known famous choreographer and director. His work helped deliver classical traditions into Telugu cinema in a format appropriate for the display screen. any other vital determine changed into Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy, who helped translate complex stage-based totally dances into more cinematic variations, adjusting for digicam angles and space. these choreographers helped ensure that conventional dance paperwork had been preserved and adapted for the brand new visible medium. Such representations additionally helped enhance a moral and non secular aesthetic, making classical dance accessible and applicable to centre-elegance viewers who might have otherwise viewed temple dance with colonial-generation stigma.

Theatrical and Devotional Influence

Inside the early many years of Telugu cinema, mainly from the 1910s to the Forties, theatre and devotional practices had a powerful impact on storytelling, overall performance style, and dance. before cinema became popular, stay level performances, temple festivals, and devotional gatherings have been the principle assets of enjoyment and religious studying in

⁴¹ Dwyer, R. (2006). *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema*. Routledge

Telugu-speak areas. those traditions performed a key role in shaping the early form of movie dance and performance.

Telugu theatre was deeply rooted in classical texts, especially the *Natyashastra*, which emphasizes rasa (emotional flavour), abhinaya (expression), and Natya (drama with dance and music). Many early filmmakers and actors came from theatrical backgrounds, where dance was naturally integrated with acting. Forms like Yakshagana, Bhagavata Mela, and Kuchipudi Natakams were performed in open-air stages and temple courtyards. These included musical narration, dramatic dialogues, and stylized dance movements.

Directors such as R. S. Prakash and H. M. Reddy adapted this format into early Telugu films. The actors carried their stage techniques, such as facial expressions, dramatic poses, and symbolic gestures, into their film performances⁸. This made early cinema resemble a “filmed play,” where the camera merely recorded a theatrical event. Even songs and dances in films followed a narrative flow, just like in Kuchipudi dance dramas.

The influence of Sanskrit theatre and regional musical dramas meant that dance was not treated as an isolated element. It was part of a larger emotional and spiritual experience. This holistic approach helped lay the foundation for dance being seen as storytelling through movement, rather than just entertainment alongside theatre, devotional traditions like Harikatha, Bhajans, Keertanas, and temple rituals contributed deeply to early cinematic fashion. In those forms, songs and gestures had been used to educate religious messages and to specific divine love or devotion. The emotional power of those practices prompted how characters in early films expressed themselves in particular in mythological and devotional cinema.

Dance in devotional settings was often performed as an offering to God. In temples, devadasis performed Bharatanatyam or similar forms as a sacred ritual. Though the devadasi system faced decline in the early 20th century due to colonial and social reform pressures, its

influence remained in the dance language of early films. Film heroines were often shown dancing before idols or performing devotional pieces, echoing the style and emotion of temple dances. Films like *Bhakta Prahlada* (1931), *Chintamani* (1937), and *Vipranarayana* (1937) reflected strong devotional elements in both their storylines and dance sequences. Dancers often used bhakti abhinaya expressions of surrender, love, or fear towards the divine. This helped shape Telugu cinema's image as one deeply connected to spiritual values and moral themes⁴². The blending of theatre and devotional culture created a distinct aesthetic in Telugu cinema. Dance was treated as a means of spiritual expression, a form of narrative enhancement, and a carrier of cultural memory. Audiences recognized and related to the dance styles, gestures, and emotions they saw on screen because these were already familiar from temple festivals, folk performances, and village drama troupes.

As Dwyer¹³ explains, Indian films of this era often sought to create a moral universe, and dance was one of the tools used to communicate values and ideals. A heroine's dance could symbolize her purity; a devotee's dance could show inner transformation; an apsara's dance could represent divine temptation. These layered meanings came directly from theatrical and religious traditions. The early years of Telugu cinema were not just a time of technical experimentation they were also a time when deep cultural traditions shaped cinematic form. The influence of regional theatre and devotional practices gave rise to a style of dance that was rich in meaning, expression, and connection with the audience. This phase helped establish dance as an inseparable part of Telugu film language, where it was used not only to entertain but also to uplift and inspire.

Golden Age (1950s-1970s)

The period among the Nineteen Fifties and Seventies is frequently described as the Golden Age of Telugu cinema, not best for its strong storytelling and memorable music

⁴² Guy, R. (1997). *Starlight, Starbright: The Early Tamil and Telugu Cinema*. Amra Publishers.

however additionally for the full-size development of cinematic dance. This turned into a time when filmmakers gave equal importance to track, lyrics, and choreography. Dance have become an essential detail of movie narratives expressing emotions, raising drama, and showcasing creative brilliance. this period become marked by way of a perfect balance between classical traditions and cinematic innovation. Many dance sequences from this era remain celebrated for his or her technical beauty, expressive energy, and cultural intensity. From the Fifties onwards, many films started to include natural classical dance paperwork like Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam, and Kathak, alongside semi-classical and people patterns. Actresses like Anjali Devi, Savitri, Jamuna, and B. Saroja Devi were skilled in classical dance and added powerful performances that seamlessly mixed abhinaya (expressions) and Nritta (pure dance actions) on screen . Films like Devadasu (1953), Mayabazar (1957), and Lava Kusha (1963) showcased conventional dance in mythological and romantic contexts. for instance, Mayabazar featured the enduring dance of Sasirekha (played through Savitri), which mixed swish motion with sturdy individual expression. similarly, Jayabheri (1959), starring Akkineni Nageswara Rao and Anjali Devi, revolved round artwork, dance, and devotion. It highlighted the struggle among religious obligation and creative desire, the use of dance as a key narrative device. Those movies additionally respected the grammar of classical dance, inclusive of proper costume, mudras (hand gestures), postures, and rhythmic patterns. in step with Barnouw and Krishnaswamy⁸ , this period saw Indian cinema adopting and showcasing its personal cultural identification through traditional bureaucracy, in place of imitating the West. Throughout the Sixties and Nineteen Seventies, Telugu cinema saw the upward push of actor-dancers who brought new patterns to the display screen. ANR and N. T. Rama Rao, although regarded for his mythological roles, frequently blanketed dramatic gestures and stylized movements akin to classical dance. Savitri, Jamuna done effective dance roles with expressive power and charm.

Dance in this era became deeply linked to the lyrics and musical compositions, lots of which had been written with the aid of poets like Pingali, Devulapalli Krishnasastri, and C. Narayana Reddy. those songs have been set to Carnatic ragas or people-stimulated melodies, giving choreographers a wealthy foundation to create expressive actions. choreographers like Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy, Heeralal, and Saleem worked for the duration of this period, bringing stage enjoy and classical training into film choreography. Their work ensured that dance sequences had emotional intensity, rhythmical shape, and cultural relevance.

Dance was not simply an addition to the story it was part of the storytelling itself. For example:

- In *Bhakta Tukaram* (1973), dance was used to express spiritual ecstasy.
- In *Narthanasala* (1963), female disguise and identity were revealed through dance (by Savitri as Brihannala).
- In *Sankarabharanam* (1979), although technically at the end of this period, the entire plot revolved around the loss and revival of classical music and dance, reinforcing the value of tradition.

Dance became a language in itself conveying love, longing, faith, grief, and joy all within a few minutes of choreography. The golden era played a vital role in popularizing Indian classical dance forms through cinema. At a time when live dance performances were mostly limited to temples and elite Sabhas, cinema brought them to the general public. Through films, audiences across urban and rural areas were exposed to Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam, and folk dances this broadened awareness and appreciation, especially among younger generations. This period also shaped the identity of female performers. The heroine was not just an object of beauty but a performer of grace, talent, and cultural value. Dance added depth to the female lead and became a symbol of Indian womanhood, artistry, and emotion¹⁴ (Dwyer, 2006).

Role of Cultural Institutions

Cultural institutions have played a vital role in shaping the dance traditions represented in Telugu cinema. From the pre-independence era through the golden age of cinema (1950s–1970s), several institutions governmental, private, religious, and educational worked towards preserving classical dance forms, training artists, and promoting dance as part of national and regional identity. These efforts influenced how dance was performed, perceived, and presented in Telugu films.

One of the most significant contributions came from institutions that focused on training and preserving classical dance. During the colonial period and immediately after independence, many traditional dance forms like Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam, and Andhra Natyam were at risk of being lost due to socio-political changes and lack of patronage⁴³ (Srinivasan, 2009).

In response, several cultural organizations were established to provide formal training, document techniques, and stage performances. For example:

- Kalakshetra (founded in 1936 in Chennai by Rukmini Devi Arundale) played a crucial role in reviving Bharatanatyam and inspired many Telugu dancers and filmmakers⁴⁴.
- Sri Siddhendra Kalakshetram, established in Kuchipudi village in 1961, became a central institution for the preservation of the Kuchipudi dance tradition. Many students from this institution later contributed to Telugu cinema as choreographers or performers.
- Sangeet Natak Akademi, formed in 1953, helped support national-level recognition and funding for classical dance practitioners.

⁴³ Srinivasan, A. (2009). *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor*. Temple University Press.

⁴⁴ Meduri, A. (2004). *Bharatanatyam as a Global Dance: Some Issues in Research, Teaching, and Presentation*. *Dance Research Journal*, 36(2).

These institutions trained generations of dancers who went on to work in films either as actors, dance directors, or choreographers. Their rigorous training in abhinaya, mudras, tala, and nritya provided the technical foundation for authentic classical dance presentations on screen.

After India's independence in 1947, there was a national effort to revive and protect Indian cultural traditions, including classical dance. Government institutions like the Andhra Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademi, Doordarshan, and University departments of Fine Arts began promoting Indian dance through concerts, documentaries, and educational programming. This helped raise public interest in traditional forms, which in turn influenced popular media like cinema.

As Dwyer¹³ (2006) notes, post-independence cultural policy saw cinema as a means of educating and uniting the public, and traditional dance became a key part of this effort. Telugu filmmakers, inspired by this environment, began to feature classical and devotional dance sequences more prominently, often with the support of trained artistes from cultural institutions. Apart from formal institutions, drama troupes and Sabhas also played an important role. Groups such as Surabhi Nataka Mandali were known for combining theatre with dance and training actors in expressive movement. These performance traditions inspired early film narratives and provided ready-made dancers and performers who could transition into cinema⁴⁵.

Similarly, Rangasthala Natya Mandalis, local community dance drama groups in Andhra Pradesh, often trained children in mythological dance roles. These children would sometimes become child artists or supporting dancers in Telugu films. The devotional and dramatic training they received gave them an expressive vocabulary that was suitable for screen acting.

⁴⁵ Rajadhyaksha, A., & Willemen, P. (1999). *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*. Oxford University Press.

Moreover, these institutions indirectly helped Telugu cinema educate and inspire audiences about the richness of their own heritage, especially at a time when Western influence was growing. Cultural institutions played an essential role in shaping the dance traditions in Telugu cinema. By preserving and promoting classical dance, training artists, and influencing cultural policy, these institutions helped ensure that dance remained a meaningful and artistic element of Telugu films. Their contributions created a pipeline of trained dancers and choreographers who brought depth, grace, and authenticity to the screen strengthening the bond between cinema and traditional art.

Pioneering Choreographers

Vempati Pedda Satyam

A pivotal figure in introducing classical aesthetics into Telugu films, Vempati Pedda Satyam (uncle of Vempati Chinna Satyam) worked as a choreographer in early talkies and is credited with adapting traditional forms like *Kuchipudi* into cinematic choreography⁴⁶. He later trained several dancers who became major contributors to Telugu cinema. Some notable films he choreographed are Panduranga mahatyam(1957), Jayabheri (1959), Narthanasala (1963) so on.

⁴⁶ Rama rao V, Natyacharya Vempati Chinna Satyam, 2005



Photo Courtesy: <https://kuchipudivaibhavam.wordpress.com/tag/vempati-pedda-sathyam/>
Plate - 2.9 : Image of Vempati Pedda Satyam

Vedantam Raghavayya

Vedantam Raghavayya was a legendary figure in Telugu cinema, widely respected as a classical Kuchipudi exponent, choreographer, actor, and film director who played a vital role in incorporating traditional dance aesthetics into early Telugu films. Born into the renowned Vedantam family, known for their commitment to the Kuchipudi tradition, Raghavayya had rigorous training in Abhinaya, Mudras, and Natyadharmi techniques, which deeply influenced his approach to cinematic choreography. He initially gained prominence as a choreographer and dance master, working on mythological films where divine and heroic characters required stylized and expressive movements. Raghavayya began his career as a dance choreographer, working on films such as *Raithu Bidda* (1939) and *Swarga Seema* (1945). He made his directorial and production debut with *Stree Sahasamu* (1951). He went on to direct many notable films, including *Devadasu* (1953), *Annadata* (1954), *Anarkali* (1955), *PremaPasam* (1956), *Bhale Ramudu* (1956), *Chiranjeevulu* (1956), *Suvarna Sundari* (1957), and *Rahasyam* (1967). In addition to his work behind the camera, Raghavayya appeared as an actor in films such as *Mohini Rukmanigada* (1937), *Garuda Garvabhangam* (1943) and *Raksharekha* (1949). He was also a co-owner of the film production house Vinodha Pictures. His adaptation of Kuchipudi grammar for film brought a sense of devotional grace and dramatic storytelling to

cinema. As highlighted by Rajadhyaksha and Willemen (1999), Vedantam Raghavayya was instrumental in proving that Indian classical dance could be effectively adapted for the cinematic medium, enriching the visual and emotional appeal of Telugu films. His work bridged the theatrical tradition of temple dance dramas and commercial filmmaking, setting a precedent for generations of choreographers and filmmakers who followed. According to Guy (1997), his deep understanding of performance tradition enabled him to maintain the spiritual and narrative integrity of dance while making it cinematically engaging for mass audiences.



Photo Courtesy : <https://www.facebook.com/filmheritagefoundation/posts/vedantam-raghavaiah-was-among-the-leading-lights-of-the-telugu-film-industry-of-/2978388539114730/>

Plate - 2.10 : Image of Vedantam Raghavaiah

C.S.R. Anjaneyulu

A prominent actor known for portraying mythological and devotional characters, C.S.R. Anjaneyulu brought a theatrical expressiveness and classical poise to his performances. His portrayal of gods and sages was often accompanied by stylized movement drawn from classical dance, especially in films like *Sri Krishna Rayabaram* (1936).



Photo Courtesy : <https://singavarapu.wordpress.com/2011/03/23/c-s-r-anjaneyulu-biography/>

Plate - 2.11 : Image of C S R Anjaneyulu

Rukmini Devi Arundale (Indirect Influence)

Though not directly associated with Telugu cinema, Rukmini Devi's revival of Bharatanatyam in the 1930s helped elevate the status of classical dance across India⁴⁷. Her emphasis on *sringara* and *bhakti* elements influenced how classical dance was viewed and presented in film, especially in South Indian cinema. Her work indirectly contributed to legitimizing the presence of classical dance on Screen.



Photo Courtesy : <https://thebetterindia.com/90623/rukmini-devi-arundale-bharatnatyam-kalakshetra-president>
Plate - 2.12 : Image of Rukhmini devi Arundale

With increasing technical sophistication in cinematography and editing, choreographers began to adapt classical dance techniques for the screen. The camera became part of the choreography, with movements and angles enhancing the rhythm, emotion, and grace of the dance. This was the era when cinematic choreography emerged as a distinct profession, with a focus on synchronizing body movement, music, and camera work.

The choreography was no longer a direct stage-to-screen translation; it became dynamic, using filmic devices like close-ups and montage to emphasize expression and movement.

Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam were the dominant classical influences on choreography during this era. Kuchipudi's fluid grace and narrative abhinaya, and Bharatanatyam's geometry and precision, were fused into dance numbers that maintained authenticity while accommodating cinematic needs. Films like *Devadasu* (1953), *Bhakta Tukaram* (1973), and *Bala Bharatam* (1972) included carefully structured classical dances. Vempati Chinna Satyam, a pioneer in

⁴⁷ Medhuri Avanthi, Nation Woman Representation: The Sutured History of the Devadasi and her dance, Theatre Journal, 2005

Kuchipudi revival and adaptation, brought structured, pure classical dance into cinema without compromising on its traditional grammar. His work played a crucial role in legitimizing classical dance in the cinematic medium.

Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy, another key figure, was known for his crisp, expressive compositions based on Bharatanatyam and Andhra Natyam traditions. He trained many actors and dancers for film roles, especially in devotional and historical genres.

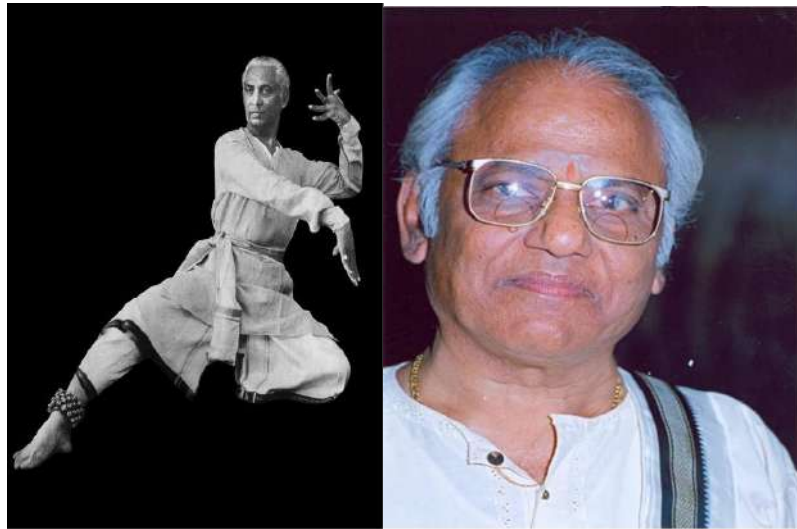


Photo Courtesy: <https://thedanceindia.com/master-vempati-the-kuchipudi-legend/>
<https://pasumarthyfoundation.com/>

Plate - 2.13: Images of Vempati Chinna Satyam and Pasumarthi Krishna Murthy

Travancore Sisters (Lalitha, Padmini and Ragini)

The Travancore Sisters Lalitha, Padmini, and Ragini were many of the earliest and most influential classical dancers to obtain extensive fame in South Indian cinema, together with Telugu movies. skilled in Bharatanatyam underneath renowned experts like Guru Gopinath and T. k. Mahalingam Pillai, they added awesome grace, technical precision, and expressive intensity to the silver screen. although they were generally associated with Tamil and Malayalam cinema, Lalitha and Padmini made massive contributions to Telugu movies at some point of the 1950s and 60s, mainly in movies like Jeevitham (1950), Ammalakkalu (1953), and Chandirani (1953). Their dance performances, regularly duets or solo pieces set to classical

Carnatic compositions, showcased problematic mudras, best rhythm, and emotive abhinaya, efficaciously popularizing Bharatanatyam among Telugu audiences. They not only expanded the function of dance in Telugu cinema but also stimulated a generation of actresses inclusive of Savitri and Jamuna to pursue classical schooling. Padmini later founded the Padmini college of pleasant Arts inside the U.S., extending their legacy into coaching and worldwide advertising of Indian classical dance. As mentioned through Dwyer¹³ and Rajadhyaksha & Willemsen¹⁸, the Travancore Sisters exemplified a completely unique blend of artistic excellence and screen air of mystery, turning dance into a powerful medium of cultural and cinematic expression. Their impact helped form the manner classical dance become integrated into Telugu film narratives, and their performances continue to be iconic references for choreographic excellence in Indian cinema. The Malayalam movie "Prasanna" in 1950 by a Telugu manufacturer and director Sreeramulu Naidu was the first to introduce all of the 3 sisters together. The film was a massive hit and the songs are taken into consideration conventional until date.



Photo Courtesy : <https://www.thenewsminute.com/features/travancore-trio-sisters-who-conquered-silver-screen-46694>

Plate - 2.14: Travancore Sisters (Lalitha, Padmini and Ragini)

Several leading actresses of the time were trained classical dancers, which allowed them to perform with technical finesse on screen:

- Vyjayanthimala, though more active in Tamil and Hindi cinema, had an influential presence in Telugu films⁴⁰. A Bharatanatyam exponent, she popularized classical dance through cinema with elegance and authenticity.
- Savitri, known for her emotional depth, delivered powerful semi-classical and dramatic dances in films like *Devadasu* and *Navarathri*.
- Krishna Kumari, also trained in classical dance, featured in several mythological and social films with memorable dance sequences, often reflecting traditional Telugu aesthetics.

These performers bridged the gap between tradition and stardom, helping classical dance reach the masses while enhancing the artistic merit of Telugu cinema.



Photo Courtesy: <https://bollywoodfiles.blogspot.com/2016/08/remembering-vyjayantimala-on-her-83rd.html>
Plate - 2.15 : Star Heroines of Golden Era (1950s-1970s)

Sundaram Master

One of the most influential choreographers of this period, Sundaram Master played a crucial role in designing dynamic group dances and stylized solo numbers⁴⁸. He trained several top actors and dancers, including Chiranjeevi and his own sons, such as Prabhu Deva.

Prabhu Deva (Early Works)

Often referred to as India's Michael Jackson, Prabhu Deva began choreographing in the late 1980s and rose to prominence in the 1990s. His work was characterized by speed, rhythm, Western technique, and creative expression. Though originally from Tamil cinema, his choreography for Telugu films like *Premikudu* (1994) and *Mr. Romeo* (1996) redefined dance expectations for the younger generation.

⁴⁸ Kumar A, Dancing with the stars: Choreography in south Indian Cinema, Film Quarterly 2008



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.cinejosh.com/news-in-telugu/4/31581/>

Plate - 2.16 : Influential Choreographers Sundaram Master and Prabhudeva

The twenty first century added a tremendous transformation inside the choreography of Telugu cinema, prompted via globalization, virtual media, and converting target market possibilities. Dance in movies developed from being narrative-driven or classically rooted to becoming aesthetic spectacles designed for mass appeal and virality.

one of the defining traits in this period is the incorporation of global dance styles which include hip-hop, salsa, modern-day, freestyle, locking-popping. those have been now not handiest used to decorate the visual appeal of songs but additionally to set up a cutting-edge, cosmopolitan image of the actors and characters. The influence of Western music movies, k-pop, and global youth subculture performed a crucial function in this evolution.

Choreographers commenced designing sequences that incorporated those bureaucracy with cinematic expression, main to a hybrid style precise to South Indian cinema. Dance exercises began to emphasize rhythmic cuts, stylized body actions, and dramatic pauses, often framed thru dynamic cinematography and enhancing. This period additionally saw the proliferation of object numbers exceedingly choreographed dance songs providing both lead heroines or visitor performers. those numbers, frequently unrelated to the plot, served to draw

wider audiences and enhance box workplace returns. Songs like "Kevvu Keka" (Gabbar Singh, 2012) and "Ringa Ringa" (Arya 2, 2009) have become iconic for their catchy beats and formidable choreography. Concurrently, Telugu dance styles started out catering to a pan-Indian market, especially with the fulfillment of dubbed variations throughout North India and OTT systems. Songs were crafted with a customary enchantment, fusing local flavor with mainstream Bollywood and global developments. This era saw the upward thrust of male stars as dance icons. Actors like Jr. NTR, Allu Arjun, and Ram Charan increased the expectations of dance overall performance in mainstream cinema. Jr. NTR, skilled in classical dance from formative years, impressed with powerful footwork and expressions. Allu Arjun became acknowledged for his fluid frame manage, innovative choreography, and trendsetting steps, regularly going viral on platforms like YouTube and Instagram. Ram Charan's polished fashion in songs like "Bangaru Kodipetta" (Magadheera, 2009) showcased how dance ought to enhance heroic presence. Television dance shows such as *Dhee*, *Aata*, and *Dance Plus* played a crucial role in bringing professional choreography into public visibility. These shows not only created celebrity choreographers and dancers but also influenced film choreography by introducing fresh talent and novel movements. Social media platforms especially YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok further democratized dance culture⁴⁹. Fan-made covers, dance challenges, and short videos contributed to the virality of film songs, making choreography a marketing tool as much as an artistic one.

Many choreographers leveraged their popularity and industry experience to move into filmmaking. Raghava Lawrence is a key example beginning as a dancer, then choreographer, and eventually directing successful horror-dance films like *Kanchana* (2011), where dance is

⁴⁹ Kaur Raminder & Mazarella, William (eds.) (2009). *Censorship in South Asia: Cultural Regulation from Sedition to Seduction*. Indiana University Press.

used as both spectacle and emotional expression. Prabhu Deva⁵⁰, already a pan-Indian dance icon, directed several Telugu and Hindi films such as *Nuvvostanante Nenoddantana* (2005) and *Wanted* (2009), where dance sequences formed the emotional and rhythmic high points. Their dual roles redefined how choreography could drive storytelling in cinema. In the landscape of Telugu cinema, parallel and art films carved a unique space where dance transcended its ornamental role and evolved into a powerful narrative device. Unlike commercial cinema where dance often functions as a spectacle parallel cinema uses dance to explore inner emotional states, cultural conflicts, and social commentary.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.cinejosh.com/news/1/22990/prabhu-and-lawrence-heart-warming-act.html>

Plate - 2.17 : Choreographers turned to directors

One of the finest examples of dance as narrative comes from the works of K. Vishwanath, a director known for blending classical arts with cinematic storytelling. In his films, dance is not just performed, it is lived. It becomes a reflection of cultural identity, moral values, personal struggles, and societal transitions.

- Sankarabharanam (1980): This film centres on the declining respect for classical music and dance in modern India. Dance here is a metaphor for spiritual purity and cultural continuity. The young dancer's devotion to a classical musician becomes a symbol of

⁵⁰ Venkataraman Leela, *Indian Classical Dance: Tradition in Transition*. Roli Books. 2015

how art can bridge generations and class divides. The choreography, primarily inspired by Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, is portrayed with reverence, and the camera lingers on expressive hand gestures (mudras) and abhinaya rather than rapid cinematic cuts.

- **Sagara Sangamam (1983):** The film narrates the journey of a classically trained dancer (played by Kamal Haasan) whose unfulfilled artistic dreams mirror his emotional and social disenfranchisement. The choreography here is expressive and internalized, capturing sorrow, longing, and nostalgia. It also comments on the erasure of classical art in a consumer-driven world.
- **Swathi Kiranam (1992):** Another Vishwanath classic, the film uses music and dance to highlight envy, mentorship, and the fragility of artistic ego. The symbolic use of movement especially in the emotional breakdowns of the protagonist shows how dance can convey psychological states in a way words cannot.

These films often employ minimalist settings, natural lighting, and extended dance sequences without editing interruptions, creating a contemplative experience for the viewer. Rather than sensationalism, the focus is on expression, rhythm, and the cultural essence of the art form.

Vishwanath's treatment of dance aligns with the Indian aesthetic concept of 'Rasa', where the goal is to evoke emotional and spiritual responses. His films use dance to critique modernity, westernization, and the commodification of tradition, while also celebrating the resilience of art and artists.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.indiatoday.in/movies/regional-cinema/story/legendary-filmmaker-actor-k-viswanath-passes-away-in-hyderabad-2329822-2023-02-03>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOQiVyJuj7M>

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/telugu/movie-details/sagara-sangamam/movieshow/61315312.cms>

Plate - 2.18: Director Vishwanth known for blending classical arts with cinematic storytelling

Dance in Telugu cinema has not only evolved as a medium of entertainment but also as a site of gender performance, negotiation of identities, and socio-political messaging. Through choreography and movement, filmmakers have depicted complex layers of femininity, masculinity, queerness, and cultural expectations, allowing dance to become a powerful vehicle of representation. Historically, female characters in Telugu films were either portrayed as idealized goddesses or sensual entertainers, with dance used to emphasize their physical grace or virtue. In mythological and devotional films from the 1940s to 1960s, actresses like Anjali Devi or Jamuna performed semi-classical dances (Kuchipudi/Bharatanatyam influenced) to reflect spiritual devotion, cultural purity, and womanly virtues. With the rise of industrial cinema within the Eighties and 1990s, the portrayal of ladies in dance started to shift. The emergence of “item numbers” and hyper-glamorous dance sequences repositioned female dancers from narrative individuals to objects of preference. While this shift drew complaint for reducing girls to visible spectacle, it also supplied a space in which female characters should express boldness, self-belief, and sexual employer as visible inside the paintings of actresses like Sridevi, Ramya Krishna, and Samantha Ruth Prabhu in modern-day hits like “Oo Antava” (Pushpa, 2021). These days, many

choreographed sequences serve twin roles showing sensuality even as additionally reclaiming power. for instance, in Rangasthalam (2018), the folks-inspired dances led through the lady lead combine rural aesthetics with modern-day assertiveness, portraying women as emotionally sturdy and socially conscious.

Dance has long been utilized in Telugu cinema to portray gender fluidity and queer identities, although frequently with comedian overtones or subtext. conventional examples encompass characters played by comedians like Brahmanandam or Ali, who go-dressed and done effeminate dance numbers for comic remedy. whilst these portrayals trusted stereotypes, they also brought audiences albeit in a roundabout way to the performative nature of gender, aligning with Judith Butler's principle of gender performativity. Past aesthetics, dance in Telugu cinema frequently contains social observation. Songs that involve woman empowerment, caste critique, or resistance to patriarchy are now woven into mainstream narratives. as an example, the choreographed road protest in Vakeel Saab (2021) makes use of rhythm and mass movement to spotlight girls' rights and cohesion.

Dance, therefore, becomes a catalyst for trade shifting past non-public expression to reflect collective struggles. The growing presence of inclusive casting in dance troupes, gender-impartial costumes, and non-romantic choreography indicators a broader shift inside the manner dance is conceptualized on the subject of identification. Dance in Telugu cinema has journeyed from the temple-inspired classical expressions of the Thirties to nowadays's digitally-driven, globally-stimulated spectacles, reflecting and reframing the sociocultural panorama of Telugu-speakme regions. the journey of dance in Telugu cinema has no longer followed a instantly or single route. as an alternative, it has grown via creative thoughts, changing beliefs, and new technologies, displaying how deeply connected it is to the lifestyle and progress of the movie enterprise. Notwithstanding current innovations, traditional dance paperwork like Kuchipudi, Andhra Natyam, and Perini keep to persuade choreography in

Telugu movies. Directors like Vendantam Raghavaiah, K. Vishwanath, and even cutting-edge filmmakers like Gunasekhar and Krish, have ensured classical aesthetics stay alive albeit in new narrative contexts. Dance stays a bridge between the past and present, retaining continuity with the area's rich cultural legacy while adapting to new media ecologies. In essence, Telugu cinema's dance history is not just about the evolution of fashion it's miles the tale of the way a society dances with its very own ameliorations.

CHAPTER 3: EVOLUTION OF DANCE IN TELUGU CINEMA

Dance has been an indispensable part of Indian cinema since its inception, serving as both a classy expression and a narrative tool. In Telugu cinema, popularly known as Tollywood, dance has evolved from its conventional roots to grow to be a dynamic and multifaceted detail of filmic storytelling. The evolution of dance in Telugu films displays a broader shift in cinematic fashion, target audience preferences, and cultural sensibilities, shaped by means of ancient, technological, and creative developments.

Early films from the 1930s and Nineteen Forties used structured regional dance styles, however they followed right patterns and have been based on nearby traditions. these dances were expressive, rhythmic, and used to inform memories. additionally, many movie artists like kantha Rao, chitoor V Nagaiah and many others., got here from degree backgrounds like Surabhi drama, Harikatha, and Burrakatha, where dance and acting had been mixed with song and dialogue. So, the dance movements in early movies were influenced by theatre, with clear hand gestures, body movements, and strong facial expressions. Later, choreographers slowly started using classical dance rules from Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, with proper steps (*adavus*), hand signs (*mudras*), and expressions (*abhinaya*). This made the dances in Telugu films more refined and closer to traditional Indian dance styles. According to Kapila Vatsyayan⁵¹, these dances followed rules from the ancient text *Natya Shastra*, which explains how drama and dance should be performed.

⁵¹ Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*. Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1977

One of the first Telugu talkies, *Bhakta Prahlada* (1932), directed by H.M. Reddy, included traditional dance to show spiritual themes. Later films like *Savithri* (1933) and *Dakshayagnam* (1938) also used traditional dance, especially in scenes with female characters doing devotional performances⁵². In the 1950s, films such as *Pathala Bhairavi* (1951), *Devadasu* (1953), became famous for their graceful dance scenes. These were choreographed by artists like Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy and Vedantam Raghavaiah, who were trained in classical dance. Their work followed expressive movements (*abhinaya*) and hand gestures (*mudras*) that matched the emotions in the story⁵³. Films such as *Devadasu* (1953) and *Maya Bazaar* (1957) showcased elegant choreographic patterns that adhered to the grammar of *Natya Shastra* and classical aesthetics⁵⁴. As per the article by Dwyer & Patel⁵⁵ in the 1970s and 1980s, Telugu films started using folk and modern dance styles too. This change was influenced by popular tastes and the rise of commercial cinema. Dance became a way to entertain people and also to build the hero's image.

The evolution of dance in Telugu cinema can be traced through its leading heroes across decades, reflecting shifts in style, audience taste, and cinematic trends. In the 1930s and 1940s, actors like L.V. Prasad, C.S.R. Anjaneyulu, K. Raghuramaiah, and C.V. Nagaiah came from classical music and theatre backgrounds. Their dance performances were rooted in dramatic gestures and devotional storytelling, often resembling *Harikatha*, *Surabhi natakam*, and folk traditions rather than codified classical styles. Relangi, known for comic timing, incorporated energetic and rhythm-based totally movement drawn from people and *Burra Katha* styles. The

⁵² Srinivas, S.V. *Megastar: Chiranjeevi and Telugu Cinema after N.T. Rama Rao*. Oxford University Press, 2009

⁵³ Raghavan, V. *The Natya Shastra and the Indian Dramatic Tradition*. The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1964

⁵⁴ Srinivasan, A. (2012). *Classical Dance in South Indian Cinema: Tradition and Transformation*. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 35(2), 215-230.

⁵⁵ Dwyer, Rachel, and Divia Patel. *Cinema India: The Visual Culture of Hindi Film*. Rutgers University Press, 2002

1950s saw the upward thrust of stars like Akkineni Nageswara Rao and N.T. Rama Rao, who added in more established classical movements prompted by Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, especially in mythological and historic movies like *Mayabazar* and *Devadasu*. at some stage in the Nineteen Sixties, Sobhan Babu delivered a extra swish and romantic fashion, with dances focusing on subtle expressions and lyrical frame language, shifting far from dramatic lifestyle. within the Nineteen Seventies and Nineteen Eighties, actors like Chiranjeevi and Krishna converted dance into lively, stylized, and cinematic spectacle. Chiranjeevi, particularly, set a new benchmark with his excessive-velocity footwork, syncopated rhythm, and mass attraction choreography, blending folk, disco, and breakdance. within the Nineteen Nineties and 2000s, stars like Pawan Kalyan, Mahesh Babu, and Jr. NTR tailored to fashionable beats and easy but elegant movements, with Jr. NTR showcasing sturdy classical roots through Kuchipudi-based totally performances. The 2010s and 2020s marked a pan-Indian expansion, with actors like Allu Arjun recognised for his fluid, experimental, and technically polished dance. Prabhas for his effective display screen presence in grand visuals, and Ram Charan, Vijay Deverakonda, and Nani bringing particular expressions of masculinity and style into overall performance. This journey from theatrical and devotional expressions to stylized and worldwide dance forms demonstrates how each era of Telugu film heroes has redefined dance on display screen, balancing lifestyle, innovation, and target audience connection.

In the virtual age, dance has transcended its traditional cinematic boundaries, turning into a effective tool for marketing and fan engagement thru social media. Viral dance challenges, YouTube views, and track video aesthetics now have an effect on how choreographers layout sequences, indicating a shift from narrative integration to spectacle and standalone entertainment fee .

This chapter traces the evolution of dance in Telugu cinema from its classical roots to its contemporary, globalized avatar, analysing its function in narrative construction, famous person-making, gender illustration, and target audience reception. through the lens of key movies, choreographers, and technological developments, the bankruptcy goals to provide a comprehensive knowledge of ways dance maintains to shape and be fashioned by Telugu cinematic lifestyle.

Influence of Indigenous Dance Forms on Telugu Film Choreography

Diverse dance bureaucracy have had a profound have an impact on the visible and narrative aesthetics of Telugu cinema. Rooted in centuries-vintage traditions, paperwork like Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, and Odissi have contributed to the shaping of movie choreography in both ancient and cutting-edge contexts. these patterns no longer handiest preserve cultural identification but additionally lend intensity to storytelling, specifically in mythological, devotional, and socially resonant narratives.

In the early years of Telugu cinema, from the Thirties to the Fifties, traditional vicinity dance became used in lots of devotional and mythological films. The film Bhakta Prahlada (1932), directed by way of H.M. Reddy, is the primary Telugu talkie and features devotional dance sequences that specific young Prahlada's deep faith in Lord Vishnu. In Sri Krishna Leelalu (1935), numerous classical dance paperwork had been used within the depiction of Krishna's playful and divine episodes, in particular for the duration of Raas Leelas.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7s5pNEsR3Rk>
 Plate - 3.1: Dance sequence in *Sri Krishna Leelalu* Movie

Different early films like *Garuda Garvabhangam* (1936) and *Dakshayagnam* (1938) blanketed temple dance scenes and performances by using characters playing gods, goddesses, and apsaras (celestial dancers). Bhakta Markandeya (1938) used Bharatanatyam-style dances to reveal temple devotion. In *Sri Venkateswara Mahatmyam* (1939), dance was a part of temple rituals and vital religious moments. these dances had been now not only for entertainment however had been linked to the tale, often highlighting feelings like devotion, sacrifice, and internal electricity.



Photo Courtesy : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HmmAYS0fSJ0&t=2135s>
 Plate - 3.2 : Dance sequence in *Dakshayagnam* (1938)



Photo Courtesy : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JImbydaik6g>
 Plate - 3.3 : Dance sequence in *Bhakta Markandeya* (1938)



Photo Courtesy : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eq4-VXmtw0g>
 Plate - 3.4 : Dance sequence in *Sri Venkateswara Mahatyam* (1939)

Another extensive film, *Bhakta Potana* (1942), confirmed classical dance in devotional settings as a part of the saint-poet's non secular journey. at some stage in the Nineteen Forties, movies like *Paduka Pattabhishekam* (1945) and *Yogi Vemana* (1947) persisted this culture. They blanketed scenes of girl dancers performing classical dances as part of the story. a first-rate movie from the 1950s, *Pathala Bhairavi* (1951), directed through k.V. Reddy, featured greater evolved institution choreography. whilst it protected folks influences too, the classical dance roots had been seen in sure devotional sequences. *Chenchu Lakshmi* (1958), based totally on a mythological story, had many dance scenes proposing apsaras and goddesses the use of conventional styles.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIO5AB43e94>
 Plate - 3.5 : Dance sequence in *Bhakta Potana* (1942)



Photo Courtesy : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIO5AB43e94>
 Plate - 3.6 : Dance sequence in *Paduka Pattabhishekam* (1945)



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8md2kvD-L1k&t=1s>

Plate - 3.7 : Dance sequence in *Yogi Vemana* (1947)

Different early films like *Garuda Garvabhangam* (1936) and *Dakshayagnam* (1938) blanketed temple dance scenes and performances by using characters playing gods, Telugu cinema has lengthy drawn concept from traditional Indian dance forms, to enhance the storytelling of mythological and devotional narratives. films from this era regularly featured intricately choreographed traditional dances set in temples, royal courts, or divine realms, imbuing scenes with both emotional depth and spiritual resonance. An extraordinary example is *Devadasu* (1953), in which characters specific issues of affection and longing thru sleek movements and expressive frame language rooted in classical dance traditions.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtS_rNYipfl

Plate - 3.8 : Traditional Dance Sequence from *Devadasu* (1953) Movie

As in keeping with creator Viswanath in *Jayabheri* (1959), dance and music performed a primary position in the adventure of a classical artist, with choreography primarily based at the movement and expression.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgG_kPnuTJs
 Plate - 3.9 : Dance Sequence from *Jayabheri* (1959) Movie

In Mahakavi Kalidasu (1960), the usage of conventional fashion dance in royal courtroom scenes helped to reveal Kalidasa's poetic and spiritual boom. *Lava Kusa* (1963) featured devotional dances by mythological characters like Sita and her sons, using classical gestures to express deep love and faith.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gN2w6MpvFmI>
 Plate - 3.10: Dance Sequence from *Mahakavi Kalidasu* (1960) Movie



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C85ax4IBUSk>
 Plate - 3.11: Dance Sequence from *Lava Kusa* (1963) Movie

In *Nartanasala* (1963), Arjuna disguised as Brihannala teaches classical dance to princess Uttara. The film showed gender-fluid dance performances with strong abhinaya (expressions) and nritya (pure dance) sequences.



Photocourtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8V4n_WgfA2s
 Plate-3.12: Dance Sequence from *Nartanasala* (1963) Movie

As per author Suresh⁵⁶ *Bhakta Tukaram* (1963) and *Sati Savitri* (1961) also used classical dance to express religious faith and inner courage, showing how dance can tell spiritual stories .

⁵⁶ Suresh, S. (2011). Bhakti in Indian Cinema. Journal of South Indian Studies.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEqhEWD11pQ>
 Plate - 3.13 : Dance Sequence from *Sati Savitri* (1961) movie



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-dEIKzs8S0>
 Plate - 3.14 : Dance Sequence from *Bhakta Tukaram* (1963) Movie

In *Shakuntala* (1966), the classical dances showed Shakuntala's gentle nature and her romantic journey using elegant Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi-inspired choreography.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CjWZDsaSLk
 Plate - 3.15: Dance Sequence from *Shakuntala* (1966) movie

In later decades, especially the 1970s to the 1990s, Telugu films continued to use classical dance, but with a deeper focus on character development and inner transformation. One important film is *Sankarabharanam* (1979), directed by K. Viswanath. It shows Bharatanatyam as a pure and respected art form, even as society starts to move away from tradition. Actress Manju Bhargavi's dance performances in songs like "*Omkananadhalu*" and "*Ragantalam Pallavi*" are based fully on Bharatanatyam, using proper adavus, mudras, and abhinaya. those scenes are not only for display—they replicate the tale's values and the emotional struggles of the characters.

Every other vital movie is *Swarna Kamalam* (1988), also directed via ok. Viswanath. This movie specializes in Kuchipudi, a classical dance form that comes from Andhra Pradesh. The story is ready a young lady who begins to recognize the fee of classical dance and slowly falls in love with it. Actress Bhanupriya plays superbly in Kuchipudi style, especially in songs like "*Andela Ravamidhi*" and "*Gallu Gallu*". these dances show Kuchipudi's appeal—its sleek moves (*lasya*), storytelling (*nritya*), and rhythm. The movie presents dance now not simplest as a overall performance however as a adventure of self-discovery and cultural satisfaction.

The film *Rudraveena* (1988), starring Chiranjeevi, additionally includes classical dance, consisting of touches of Odissi. even though Odissi isn't local to Andhra Pradesh, the movie makes use of it to show countrywide cultural solidarity. Classical dance in *Rudraveena* is shown as a part of India's shared history and is used to promote peace, tradition, and values. different classical paperwork like Mohiniyattam and Manipuri also appear in small components of Telugu movies, especially in pageant or dream sequences supposed to represent India's diversity. Viswanath played a large function in making classical dance popular through cinema. His films not only entertained however also taught viewers approximately the field, emotion, and beauty behind these historical dance bureaucracy. Actors like Manju Bhargavi and

Bhanupriya added grace, skill, and emotional depth to these movies, leaving a robust impact on visitors.

Through these early and later films, classical dance has remained a sturdy part of Telugu cinema. From black-and-white mythological films to colorful cultural dramas, classical dance maintains to connect the target audience with tradition, spirituality, and identity. A putting instance is the film *Sankarabharanam* (1979), directed by means of ok. Viswanath, which showcases Bharatanatyam as a car of classical purity against the backdrop of a changing society. The songs "Omkanadhalu" and "Ragantalam Pallavi", done with meticulously based Bharatanatyam moves, exemplify the deep reverence Telugu cinema holds for traditional classical dance. these compositions are choreographed the use of the codified adavus, mudras, and expressive abhinaya of Bharatanatyam, thereby reinforcing the narrative's spiritual and cultural undertones. Such sequences are not mere visual embellishments but function indispensable storytelling equipment, frequently embodying the devotion and discipline of the characters. Actress Manju Bhargavi's performance in *Sankarabharanam* remains iconic for its technical precision and emotive expression rooted in Bharatanatyam.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bV6qTLAJIos>
Plate - 3.16: Dance Sequence from movie *Shankharabharanam* Movie

A landmark portrayal of Kuchipudi in Telugu cinema is determined in ok. Viswanath's *Swarna Kamalam* (1988), a movie that gracefully captures the non-secular and emotional journey of a

young, contemporary girl reconnecting together with her classical roots. The movie becomes a cinematic ode to standard dance, seamlessly weaving the protagonist's transformation with the resurgence of cultural identification. The songs "Andela Ravamidhi" and "Gallu Gallu", choreographed inside the Kuchipudi way of life and carried out through Bhanupriya, stand out for their authenticity, lyrical motion, and visual elegance. those sequences are not merely decorative; they embody the center elements of Kuchipudi graceful lasya (feminine elegance), intricate rhythms, and expressive storytelling performed with outstanding precision. "Andela Ravamidhi", particularly, showcases the delicate use of adavus, hand gestures (mudras), and facial expressions (abhinaya), reflecting the devotional undercurrent of the shape. in the meantime, "Gallu Gallu" explores an extra rustic aesthetic, connecting Kuchipudi to its folk-theatrical roots. thru cautious choreography and symbolic framing, the film uses dance as an effective metaphor for internal evolution, cultural rediscovery, and female resilience . Viswanath's vision goes beyond mere performance; he provides Kuchipudi as a lived philosophy—rooted in discipline, emotional intensity, and religious inquiry. His work helped popularize the classical artwork form for modern audiences, ensuring its relevance throughout generations, even as Bhanupriya's performance delivered grace and emotional nuance that similarly more desirable the cinematic enchantment⁵⁷.



Photo Courtesy: <https://cinemanrityagharana.blogspot.com/2011/07/film-classical-dances-of-bhanupriya.html>

Plate - 3.17: Dance Sequence of Bhanu Priya from *Swarnakamalam* movie

⁵⁷ "Dance flows through my life: Bhanupriya." *The Hindu*, April 10, 2016.

By integrating Kuchipudi authentically into the cinematic narrative, these films have played a crucial role in sustaining and popularizing the art form among wider audiences, both within and beyond Andhra Pradesh.

Although not native to Andhra Pradesh or Telangana, Odissi has occasionally appeared in Telugu films, symbolizing pan-Indian classical unity and feminine grace. While Odissi is not indigenous to Andhra Pradesh or Telangana, its intentional representation in Telugu cinema underscores a pan-Indian classical unity and the evocation of feminine grace. Odissi's curvilinear torso movements and intricate footwork offer a compelling visual and stylistic contrast to the angular precision of Bharatanatyam and the fluid expressiveness of Kuchipudi. A noteworthy example is *Swarnakamalam* (1988), directed by K. Viswanath. The song "Shiva Poojaku," though it features mostly vaguely classical-inspired dancing with a few segments of Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam, Manipuri, and Odissi-costumed dancing, appears to be shot mostly around Bhubaneswar, Orissa at such locations as the Bindu Sagar tank at the and the Shanti Stupa on the Dhauli Giri hills near Bhubaneswar.⁵⁸



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4htJnHaKI4w>

Plate - 3.18: Dance Sequences from song Shiva Poojaku in *Swarnakamalam* Movie

⁵⁸ Blog: <https://cinemanrityagharana.blogspot.com/2012/10/found-sharon-lowens-odissi-dance-in.html>

In the movie *Subhalekha* (1982) featuring lead actor Chiranjeevi performing a sequence that incorporates elements of Kathak, Kathakali, and Kuchipudi.⁵⁹ This reflects an early example of telegraphed classical amalgamation, where diverse classical forms unite under a star's persona, enhancing spectacle while dialoguing with authenticity.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFcjK00I6_k&t=865s
Plate - 3.19: Different Traditional Dance Sequences from *Subhalekha* Movie

Incorporation of Dance Styles in Contemporary Choreography

The evolution of dance in Telugu cinema from 1940 to 2025 reflects a rich tapestry of classical tradition, regional folk culture, and global dance influences. The choreography has gone through enormous transformation from strict adherence to Indian nearby patterns to the include of hybrid, experimental, and globalized bureaucracy.

Dance bureaucracy like Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, and Odissi have played an important position in shaping dance in Telugu cinema. those dance bureaucracy, which have existed for centuries, are not simply beautiful to observe however additionally help tell stories with deep feelings, spirituality, and tradition. In Telugu films, mainly the ones based totally on mythology and devotion, classical dance is used to express characters' emotions, divine electricity, and conventional values. over the years, those styles have added depth and splendor to Telugu film choreography.

⁵⁹ cinemanrityagharana.blogspot.com

The evolution of dance in Telugu cinema is intricately linked to the socio-cultural and aesthetic shifts inside Indian film history. A comparative observe of *Devadasu* (1953) and *Gundamma Katha* (1962) well-known shows how cinematic dance transitioned from classical traditions to theatrical and folk-infused expressions. In *Devadasu*, directed via Vedantam Raghavaiah a Kuchipudi maestro himself the choreography draws closely from classical Indian dance paperwork, especially Kuchipudi . The emotional depth of the movie is mirrored in its dance sequences, where abhinaya (expressive gestures) turns into the primary vehicle of character improvement. For instance, the portrayal of Devadas’s internal suffering and Parvati’s longing is enhanced through delicate gestures and slow, emotive movements, adhering to classical grammar⁶⁰.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=1hbkMufj-pE>

Plate-3.20: Dance sequence from movie *Devadasu*

By contrast, *Gundamma Katha*, directed by Kamalakara Kameswara Rao and choreographed by Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy, signals a departure from strict classicality toward more

⁶⁰ Srinivas, S. V. (2002). *Megastar: Chiranjeevi and Telugu Cinema after N.T. Rama Rao*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

theatrical and folk-inspired dance styles⁶¹. Songs like *Lechindi Nidra Lechindi Mahila Lokam* incorporate not only group choreography but also elements of social satire and women's empowerment, blending semi-classical gestures with accessible folk vocabulary. The inclusion of such dance sequences indicates the growing role of cinema as a medium of social commentary during the 1960s, responding to a more diversified and mass audience (Dwyer & Patel, 2002).

Furthermore, while *Devadasu* reflects the aesthetic and moral dilemmas of a feudal, emotionally intense narrative, *Gundamma Katha* aligns with modernist sensibilities and domestic realism. The dance becomes less about individual expression and more about collective experience, humour, and commentary. This evolution illustrates a broader trend in Telugu cinema, wherein dance transitioned from a medium of poetic introspection to a tool of theatrical, socio-political engagement.



Photo Courtesy : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sToU0JnDDoc>
Plate - 3.21: Dance sequence in the Film *Gundamma Katha*

⁶¹ Rao, A. K. (2010). *Dance and the Telugu Screen: A Cultural Study*. Hyderabad: Telugu Academy.

A significant transformation in Telugu cinema choreography emerged during the 1980s and 1990s, spearheaded by choreographers like Prabhu Deva, who introduced dynamic elements of breakdance, hip-hop, jazz, and funk. Iconic songs inclusive of “Chikubuku Raile” from *Gentleman* (1993) and “Urvasi Urvasi” from *Premikudu* (the Telugu-dubbed model) exemplify the developing recognition of Western-stimulated avenue dance styles throughout this period. From the 2000s onward, Telugu cinema skilled an remarkable surge of urban choreography, heavily fashioned by using Western road dance bureaucracy and present day styles. The movie style (2006), choreographed via Lawrence, performed a pivotal function in bringing dance battles and complicated Western strategies to mainstream audiences. Lawrence’s choreography in songs like “O Kala” and “Chittoor Rani” tested an adept fusion of Western moves with Indian sensibilities, putting new standards for technical precision and visible appeal.

Following this, *Arya 2* (2009) featured stylized hip-hop sequences that skillfully blended global dance vocabularies with local rhythms, reflecting a nuanced balance between modernity and local subculture. This city choreographic trend has persevered into current films together with *DJ Tillu* (2022) wherein choreographers have experimented with integrating Western beats and motion vocabularies with Telugu rhythmic styles. This evolution in dance reflects the changing tastes and cultural expressions of city young people, affirming choreography’s position as a critical website of contemporary cultural negotiation.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcUR_J0-Dko
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vkRRYMImuo>

Plate - 3.22: Dance sequences from films *Gentleman* and *Premikudu*

The Eighties and Nineties saw the emergence of choreographers like Suchitra Chandrabose, whose work in movies inclusive of *Yamaleela* (1994) and *Ooyala* (1998) earned her Nandi and Filmfare awards, mixing classical schooling with relatable storytelling. The past due 1990s and early 2000s introduced choreographers like Brinda master, who combined clean visual staging with emotive classical have an impact on in songs like those in *Preminchukundam Raa* (1997) which features Venkatesh and Preethi Zinta in lead roles and Chinni Prakash, whose vibrant, dramatic styles were seen in mass hits like *Govindudu Andarivadele* (2014). The 2010s marked a new technology with choreographers like Sekhar master, who commenced his adventure from tv and rose to fame with songs like “Topu Lesi Poddu” (*Iddarammayilatho*, 2013), “Seeti Maar” (DJ, 2017), and “Ramuloo Ramulaa” (*Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo*, 2020), developing catchy hook steps that became kids traits. in addition, Prem Rakshith gained global acclaim with “Naatu Naatu” from *RRR* (2022), showcasing excessive-electricity, synchronized actions that gained the Academy Award for excellent unique track.

Post-2010, Choreographers and Film makers began exploring avant-garde, thematic choreography, where motion pondered philosophical or socio-political narratives extra than just entertainment. *Sye* (2004) and *Vedam* (2010) experimented with ensemble dance sequences portraying social struggles. Sekhar Kammula and Vijay Deverakonda’s films (like *Arjun Reddy*, 2017) shifted toward minimalistic body language, breaking the traditional want for elaborate song-and-dance. the use of contact improvisation, symbolic floor paintings, and urban abstract paperwork became greater seen in movies like *Care of Kancharapalem* (2018) and *Virata Parvam* (2022), blurring the line among realism and stylization. Dance also have become a device of gender expression and fluidity, allowing lady dancers and male actors to cross conventional overall performance barriers. moreover, dance fact indicates like Dhee and

Dance Plus Telugu contributed to avant-garde choreography by way of nurturing younger experimental dancers who then entered the film enterprise.

Famous Dance Songs and Their Cultural Impact

Dance in Telugu cinema has lengthily performed a vital role in storytelling, emotional expression, and cultural transmission. From conventional dance forms to folk-infused beats and modern avenue styles, iconic dance numbers have left a deep imprint on audiences, shaping not just cinematic narratives but additionally wider cultural and industrial landscapes. This segment explores the evolution and cultural importance of landmark songs across many years, the function of dance as a commercial asset, and how social media has converted dance intake in recent years. The history of Telugu movie dance is rich with milestone songs which have helped outline cinematic eras and social moods. In the early decades, dance numbers served as interludes of entertainment, often relying on traditional or regions dance forms . One of the earliest landmark songs, “Aaresukoboyi Paresukunnu” from *Adavi Ramudu* (1977), became a cultural anthem not only because of its upbeat folk rhythm but also due to its lively choreography and the charismatic performance of N.T. Rama Rao. The choreography was deeply rooted in regional dance traditions, making it accessible and celebratory for rural audiences¹⁰.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUN_Z9ald8c

Plate - 3.23: Dance sequence of song “Aaresukoboyi Paresukunnu” in *Adavi Ramudu* (1977)

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a shift in both form and content. Songs such as “Bangaru Kodipetta” from *Gharana Mogudu* (1992), performed by Chiranjeevi, integrated folk elements with high-energy, almost acrobatic movements. These performances contributed to the actor’s rise as a “dancing hero,” a title that redefined stardom in Telugu cinema.



Photo courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxvUiz6s4Gk>

Plate - 3.24: Dance sequence from the song “Bangaru Kodipetta” in the film *Gharana Mogudu* (1992).

In the 2000s and past, the visual aesthetic of dance numbers advanced drastically. Songs like “top Lechipoddi” from *Iddarammayilatho* (2013) and “Cinema Choopista Mava” from *Race Gurram* (2014) mixed urban fashion choreography with dramatic digicam movements, frequently drawing from jazz, hip-hop, and salsa. those songs now not best received popularity for their visible appeal however also confirmed how choreography had end up a innovative combo of tradition and modernity.

In Telugu cinema, dance has transcended its creative cause to turn out to be a vital industrial motive force. The inclusion of nicely-choreographed songs has regularly been a strategic circulate to beautify a movie’s marketability. large-price range films frequently release dance numbers as promotional singles, growing buzz months earlier than the actual movie hits the screen. for instance, promotional campaigns for movies like *DJ* (2017) and

Sarrainodu (2016) revolved around showcasing energetic dance sequences proposing celebrity performers. Actors such as Chiranjeevi, Jr. NTR, Ram Charan, and Allu Arjun have evolved reputations as super dancers, making them worthwhile belongings to the industrial appeal in their movies. Dance numbers such as “Ringa Ringa” (*Arya 2*, 2009) and “Ramulo Ramula” (*Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo*, 2020) regularly garnered millions of views on virtual platforms within days of release. The songs contributed substantially to box-office openings and occasionally outperformed the film’s storyline in long-time period target market recall.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.facebook.com/AlluArjun/photos/ringa-ringa-m/10150409865981743/>
Plate - 3.25: Allu Arjun in “Ringa Ringa” song– *Arya 2* (2009)

one of the maximum impactful latest milestone songs is “Butta Bomma” from *Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo* (2020), achieved via Allu Arjun. The choreography, noted for its easy footwork and expressive gestures, went viral global. Its popularity on social media structures caused worldwide dance covers, such as performances by using global dancers, as a result reflecting the increasing globalization of Telugu movie dance⁶².

⁶² Interview with Jani Master (2023), ETV Dance Diaries



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mDCVzruYzQ>

Plate- 3.26 : Dance sequences from song “Butta Bomma” in *Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo*

Moreover, manufacturers and choreographers have started out focusing on the replay cost of dance numbers, aiming for compositions that viewers would watch a couple of times on YouTube or share on structures like WhatsApp and Instagram. This client behaviour has made dance-centric songs a essential a part of the sales strategy for plenty Telugu movies.

Item Numbers in Telugu Cinema

Object songs have played a significant role in enhancing the mass attraction of Telugu cinema, evolving from subtle solo dance performances in early many years to superstar-driven, choreographically complicated sequences now a days. inside the Nineteen Forties to 1960s, female dancers have been regularly featured in club or court docket settings, performing standalone dances to entertain royal or villainous characters in movies. these sequences, though now not termed “object numbers” then, laid the foundation for the style. Actresses like Jyothi Lakshmi, Jayamalini and later Silk Smitha have become popular for such roles. Jyothi Lakshmi’s performances in films like *Palletoori Monagadu* (1976) and *Bobbili pulli* (1982) displayed cabaret-style dances that captivated audiences.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=p_Sy7TRYHqY
 Plate - 3.27 : Dance sequences from songs “O Subba Rao ” and “Neevu Mardiva”

Similarly, Silk Smitha’s dance in “Bavalu Sayya” from *Baava Bavamaridi* movie became widely recognized, combining sensual expression with bold choreography that pushed the boundaries of female performance on screen.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ZpG9o5458ec>
 Plate - 3.28 : Dance sequence from *Baava Bavamaridi* Movie

A major transformation occurred in the late 1990s and 2000s, with the rise of specialized item dancers like Mumaith Khan, whose energetic style and bold screen presence redefined the genre. Her breakthrough came with the chartbuster “Ippatikinka Naa Vayasu” from *Pokiri*, followed by hits like and “Oorori Yogi” from *Yogi* Movie. These songs, blending Western styles with Indian beats, were specifically choreographed to create high-impact visuals and became central to film marketing.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yH2ChG0Cwgs>
 Plate - 3.29 : Dance sequence from *Pokiri* and *Yogi*

From the 2010s to 2020s, object songs like “Kevvu Keka” (Gabbar Singh, 2012) to “Oo Antava” (Pushpa: The upward push, 2021) finished great recognition through social media virality and catchy choreography. in the 2020s, Telugu object songs have reached new popularity through a mix of active choreography, social media virality, and thematic boldness. Following this, “Oo Antava Oo Oo Antava” (Pushpa: The upward thrust, 2021) offering Samantha Ruth Prabhu and Allu Arjun became a cultural phenomenon, stated for its sultry choreography by using Ganesh Acharya and viral “Oo antava” hook topping YouTube charts and sparking internet-scale imitation. throughout the 2020s, other high-profile item tracks have emerged inclusive of “Pakka local”, “Swing Zara”, and freshmen led by Nora Fatehi in southern remakes improving the item track’s pan-Indian attraction and elevating Telugu dance tradition with progressive choreography and mass-market enchantment.



Photo Courtesy: <https://moviegalleri.net/2012/05/gabbar-singh-item-song-hot-stills-malaika-arora-pawan-kalyan.html>

Plate - 3.30 : Dance sequence of song “Kevvu Keka” from *Gabbar Singh* (2012)



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NybUdNAo9pg>

Plate - 3.31: Dance sequence of song “Swing Zara” – *Jai Lava Kusha* (2017)



Photo courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_wB6byrl5k

Plate - 3.32: Dance sequence of song “Oo Antava Mava” – *Pushpa* (2021)

At the same time as a number of those songs have drawn grievance for his or her portrayal of women, they maintain to keep cultural importance. They frequently serve as visible high factors in movies, contributing to their industrial achievement and shaping public reminiscence. Dancers like Jyothi Lakshmi, Silk Smitha, and Mumaith Khan paved the way for the evolution of the item quantity in Telugu cinema, making it a specific and influential a part of its narrative and musical culture.

Technological Advancements and Their Role in Dance Presentation

The integration of pc Generated Imagery (CGI) and visible effects (VFX) has appreciably transformed how dance is anticipated and offered in Telugu cinema, with early instances seen in films like *Ammoru* (1995), which pioneered VFX usage in Telugu films, and *Anji* (2004), starring Chiranjeevi, which, at the same time as no longer dance-centric, showcased the opportunities of CGI-stronger overall performance. This fashion won momentum with *Magadheera* (2009), directed by means of S. S. Rajamouli, wherein grand visuals and CGI had been combined seamlessly with choreographed sequences, followed by using *Dookudu* (2011) and *Nenokkadine* (2014), which featured stylized results in musical numbers. The *Baahubali* series (2015–2017) was centered on dance, it driven the bounds of VFX in musical storytelling, laying the foundation for later movies like *RRR* (2022), wherein CGI and VFX performed a relevant function in raising the visible and emotional impact of dance and movement set portions. the combination of pc Generated Imagery (CGI) and visible outcomes (VFX) has extensively redefined how dance is imagined, done, and skilled in Telugu cinema. earlier, choreography was restricted to bodily space and real-international backdrops. however, from the 2010s onward, filmmakers commenced experimenting with digitally greater visuals to create surreal dance environments..

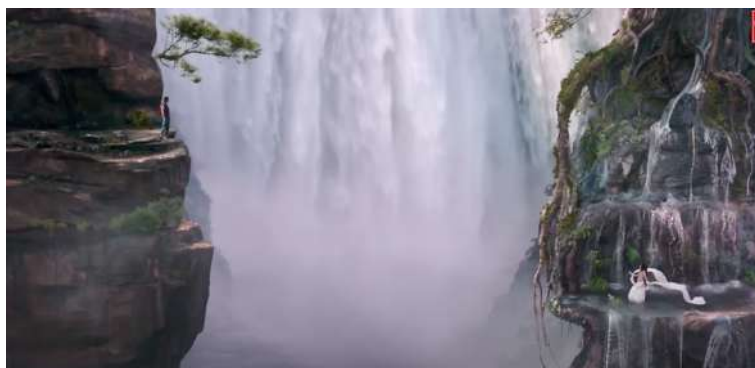


Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jpcUd5A5Jw>

Plate - 3.33: Dance sequence from *Baahubali: The Beginning* (2015) — “Dhivara” song
Tamannah performing with CGI-enhanced waterfall and forest.

This sequence illustrates how digital settings amplify the grandeur of classical moves, immersing the viewer in a mythic space.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nh0CmiYkGc4>

Plate - 3.34: CGI-heavy dance in *Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy* (2019). Patriotic group performance amidst fiery visual effects.

VFX was used to exaggerate both emotion and scale, aligning dance with epic storytelling. Visual effects also help portray superhuman agility, freeze-frame moves, and fantasy transformations. For instance, *Om Namo Venkatesaya* (2017) employed CGI to depict divine dance blessings from celestial figures, blending spiritual iconography with digital choreography⁶³.

Modern cinematography and editing techniques have introduced new visual grammars that shift how choreography is perceived. The camera has become an active dance partner moving dynamically with performers, cutting rapidly, and zooming into footwork and facial expressions.

⁶³ *Journal of Indian Cinematic Innovations* (2020).



. Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nh0CmiYkGc4>
 Plate - 3.35: “Seeti Maar” – Allu Arjun in *DJ* (2017).
 Camera zooming and rotating around high-speed moves.

Motion blur effects, color grading, and split-screen layouts (seen in films like *Pushpa: The Rise*, 2021) make the choreography feel fast-paced and modern, even when traditional steps are being used. Cinematographer R. Rathnavelu explained in a 2022 interview that editing styles now co-evolve with dance choreography in pre-visualization stages, especially for mobile screen compatibility in *Journal of Visual Culture in South Indian Cinema*, 2022⁶⁴.

Cultural Significance and Narrative Function of Dance

Dance in Telugu films has long reflected the cultural ideals of the time, often celebrating women for their elegance and expressive grace, while highlighting strength and dynamism through male performances. Over the years, these portrayals have evolved, allowing both genders to explore diverse styles and narratives, leading to a more balanced and empowering representation of dance on screen.

In the sooner a long time (Nineteen Fifties–70s), heroines like Savitri and Jamuna were regularly portrayed in devotional or romantic roles, the use of classical dance to specific modesty, piety, and love. Their movements were rooted in Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, emphasizing subtlety. In comparison, modern-day actresses like Samantha Ruth Prabhu or

⁶⁴ *Journal of Visual Culture in South Indian Cinema* (2022)

Shruti Haasan carry out high-power, business dances frequently designed across the male gaze choreographed for visible appeal and virality. The shift from grace to glamour reflects broader social changes in how femininity is perceived.

However, this transformation isn't one-dimensional. Films like *Rangasthalam* (2018) and *RRR* (2022) present female characters dancing with agency, defiance, and identity.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWWHI7SE0KQ>

Plate - 3.36: Dance sequence of Ram Charan and Samantha in *Rangasthalam*

Men in Telugu cinema have also evolved from stoic, non-dancing heroes (like N.T. Rama Rao) to contemporary stars like Allu Arjun and Jr. NTR, who are trained dancers. Their moves blend masculinity with grace, breaking stereotypes about male dance performance.⁶⁵

In rural-based movies, choreographers often borrow steps from native ritualistic dances, adapting them for the screen with minimal modification. The song “Aa Gattununtaava” from *Rangasthalam* (2018) borrows from South Indian Dance, reinforcing authenticity and regional pride.

⁶⁵ Gayatri, M. (2019). *Gendered Choreographies: Feminine and Masculine Movement in Telugu Films*



Photo Courtesy :<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=yeRAwhtyD3g&t=46s>
 Plate - 3.37: Dance sequence of *Aa Gattununtaava* song in *Rangasthalam* Movie

Moreover, these scenes often blur the line between reel and real with villagers performing in real locations during actual festivals. The inclusion of these moments preserves local dance idioms and showcases the diversity of Telangana and Andhra cultural identities.

Even films centered around urban themes like *Srimanthudu* (2015) or *Maharshi* (2019) include folk dances to symbolize roots and community. Here, the dance isn't just an act; it is a symbol of reunion and respect for rural heritage. Interestingly, ritualistic dance performances have also been used to depict female empowerment and divine embodiment. The Veera Bhadra dance, when performed by women in films like *Ammoru* (1995), invokes both devotion and strength.⁶⁶

Choreographers and Their Artistic Contributions

Choreographers in Telugu cinema have long been the invisible architects of its visual energy and cultural resonance. From classical-inspired moves to mass-commercial sequences, they shape how dance functions not just in entertainment, but in identity formation, star power, and audience connection.

⁶⁶ Suresh, K. (2020). *Dance and Identity in Telugu Culture: A Visual Anthropology*

The golden technology of Telugu cinema owes a great deal to veterans like Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy, Heeralal grasp, and Saleem, who delivered cinematic stylization to stage-sure classical dance paperwork. Their vision brought an operatic first-rate to songs in mythological and devotional movies.

Sundaram, a stalwart who skilled stars throughout South India, revolutionized choreography by using blending classical, folks, and western dance. His paintings inside the Nineteen Eighties and 1990s laid the foundation for genre fluidity in dance. Raghuram, even though more acknowledged for Tamil movies, worked substantially in Telugu cinema too. He specialized in expressive storytelling via facial expressions and dramatic body language. within the 2000s, choreographers like Raju Sundaram, Lawrence Raghavendra, and Dinesh took centre degree, bringing hip-hop, breakdance, and cinematic gymnastics into Telugu displays. Their efforts laid the foundation for the global dance revolution that Telugu cinema participates in these days.

Tarun Kumar, popularly called Tarun master, emerged as a dynamic choreographer within the late 2000s and 2010s, gaining large interest for his stylish, rapid-paced, and youth-centric choreography. initially a dancer and assistant choreographer, he slowly carved a spot for himself along with his distinct choreography for young stars and mass numbers. Tarun grasp has played an important role in shaping present day dance in Telugu films through his dynamic and flexible choreography. He rose to prominence by synchronizing city beats, avenue dance, hip-hop, and Telugu folks elements imparting a fresh alternative to each classical-rooted choreography (like Brinda's) and high-theatrics choreography (like Chinni Prakash's). Tarun master is enthusiastic about perfection in step sync he frequently trains history dancers carefully to make certain that the lead star stays visually in rhythm with the group, giving a smooth and powerful visual effect. He rose to fame with the film *Arya 2* (2009), where he

choreographed hit songs like “Ringa Ringa,” “Uppenantha,” and “My Love is long past.” these songs showcased a mix of energy, expressive body language, and elegant formations that fast became fan favourites. His expertise for mixing synchronized institution dance with catchy steps was in addition seen in *Iddarammayilatho* (2013), mainly in songs like “Run Run” and “top Lesi Poddi.” He persevered his a success collaboration with actor Allu Arjun in *Sarrainodu* (2016) for the tune “Blockbuster,” and again in *DJ* (2017) with the chartbuster “Seeti Maar,” both of which featured robust mass-enchancement choreography with signature hook steps. In *S/O Satyamurthy* (2015), his work at the track “Come to the celebration” added a youthful charm with smooth and current movements. Songs like “Dimaak Kharaab” and “iSmart name track” became popular now not only for the song but for his or her viral step moments. Across those movies, Tarun master has shown an ability to merge traditional rhythm with current power, growing dance numbers that aren't only visually attractive however additionally emotionally in sync with the narrative. His contribution has helped redefine business dance in Telugu cinema, specifically in phrases of the way tune and motion beautify a hero's screen presence.

Chinni Prakash is a renowned choreographer whose dynamic and expressive fashion has enriched Telugu cinema's song-and-dance sequences because the early 2000s. Chinni Prakash, alongside together with his spouse Rekha Prakash, delivered a brand new theatricality and visible extravaganza to Telugu track sequences. starting inside the past due 80s and peaking within the 90s and 2000s, Chinni Prakash's choreography is cited for mass attraction, power-packed steps, and large-scale institution formations. Chinni Prakash become instrumental in giving Telugu dance songs a pan-Indian business language characterized by way of vibrant visuals, dramatic costumes, folk affects, and lively moves. He choreographed landmark songs like “Bangaru Kodi Petta” (*Gharana Mogudu*, 1992) and “Rakkamma Kaiya Thattu” (Tamil tune that prompted Telugu compositions), inspiring an era of hero-centric dance

numbers. His songs frequently featured hundreds of history dancers, grand props, and synchronized steps that were tailor-made to focus on the celebrity (particularly Chiranjeevi, Nagarjuna, Balakrishna). He was unafraid to test with Indian folk forms, Western disco, breakdance, and even complicated like choreography. He changed into unafraid to experiment with Indian folks paperwork, Western disco, breakdance, or even circus-like choreography. His work consists of the active “Bavagari Choope” from *Govindudu Andarivadele* (2014), which earned him a nomination for Choreography – Telugu at the 4th South Indian worldwide Movie Awards. Known for his sharp footwork, vibrant group formations, and cinematic staging, Chinni has also choreographed hit songs in films like *I Love You* (2019), bringing a glossy, modern appeal to the visuals . Though he began his career in Bollywood, working on chartbusters like “Bambai Humko Jam Gayi” (*Swarg*) and “Jumma Chumma De De” (*Hum*), he has carried his nationwide fame into Telugu cinema with style and finesse . His ability to handle large groups of dancers and craft catchy hook steps earned him respect in the South Indian film industry . Chinni continues to shape the choreography scene, evident from his ongoing work across genres and films. His contributions underline the crossover appeal of his craft and his pivotal role in raising the standard of dance presentation in contemporary Telugu movies.

Choreographers in Telugu cinema are frequently known for wonderful visual languages. for instance, Sekhar is known for his use of synchronized organization motion and layered formations, in particular with stars like Allu Arjun and Ram Charan. Jani grasp delivered greater competitive, beat-pushed steps that emphasize frame energy and air of secrecy. His paintings with Jr. NTR and Ram Charan has been instrumental in defining the "mass dance aesthetic" — a formidable, rhythmic, power-targeted shape of motion. In assessment, Brinda master added fluid grace and dramatic gestures into romantic numbers. Her choreography in movies like *Manmadhudu* and *Ye Maaya Chesave* combined semi-classical

and cinematic romance, using subtle hand gestures and smooth footwork. improvements have also come within the form of digicam-aware choreography, in which movement is designed for drone photographs, 360-diploma spins, or track-video-style edits. This changed into obtrusive in *Pushpa*'s “Srivali” music choreographed through Jani , in which the choreography become emotionally minimum however visually striking, improving the character’s arc.

Prem Rakshith is a celebrated choreographer in Telugu cinema, widely known for his progressive, lively, and emotionally resonant dance sequences. He has notably shaped the visible and performative language of many Telugu films, particularly together with his paintings along fundamental stars like Jr NTR, Allu Arjun, and Ram Charan. he's the creative genius in the back of Naatu Naatu — the track that danced its manner into records, bringing India its first actual Oscar for pleasant original tune! From the mass beats of *Kantri* to the soulful sway of *Brindavanam*, and from the electrifying steps of mood to the worldwide sensation RRR, this grasp craftsman has redefined choreography in Indian cinema.

Female Choreographers and Changing Narratives

The sector of Telugu dance choreography has lengthy been male-dominated, however recent many years have visible a consistent upward push in girl choreographers who are reshaping narrative and performative areas. Brinda, one of the earliest a success female choreographers, added sensitivity and emotion into choreography specifically in songs centred round female protagonists or romantic yearning. Her touch is regularly substantial within the manner her dancers use space delicately but impactfully. Another modern icon is Gayathri Raghuram, known for her sharp, high-energy movements and transition sequences that blur the line between dance and dramatic action. Suchitra Chandrabose is another most influential and respected choreographers in Telugu cinema, known for her graceful, expressive, and culturally rich dance compositions. From the heartfelt romance of *Nuvvu Nenu*, to the serene beauty of

Anand and *Godavari*, and the fierce grace of *Arundhati*, her choreography has left a deep cultural imprint on Telugu cinema. These women also challenge the narrative dominance of the male gaze in item numbers, often presenting the female dancer as a storyteller or agent of seduction, not just an object. Moreover, these choreographers are increasingly collaborating across platforms, training actresses for OTT dance shows, reality programs, and YouTube-dominant video songs, thereby expanding their reach and influence. From the grandeur of NTR's temple dance to the rugged stylizations of *Pushpa*, from Brinda's romantic elegance to Jani's rhythmic force, Telugu choreography continues to evolve becoming more global, inclusive, and narrative-rich.

Audience Reception and Evolving Expectations

The symbiotic relationship between cinema and its audience has always shaped the trajectory of film content, and this is particularly evident in Telugu cinema's dance choreography. With evolving audience demographics, publicity to international tradition, and the arrival of digital media, dance performances in Telugu films have passed through incredible modifications to meet transferring viewer expectancies.

Historically, the Telugu audience favoured classical and semi-classical dance performances that showcased grace, storytelling, and cultural ethos. movies together with *Sankarabharanam* (1980) and *Swarnakamalam* (1988) replicate this segment, where dance was rooted in subculture and carried narrative weight (Dwyer & Patel, 2002). 90's liberalization led to increased exposure to Western pop culture thru satellite tv and later, online streaming. therefore, a shift in preferences emerged: audiences started out to lean in the direction of dynamic, stylized, and rapid-paced choreography encouraged by hip-hop, jazz, and Bollywood masala formats (Srinivas, 2009). Songs from films like *Arya* (2004) or *Race Gurram* (2014) display this transformation with actors appearing electrifying actions

choreographed for mass attraction. A comparative chart showing evolution from classical dance sequences (1950s) to fusion/modern dance (2020s onwards), is as proven in Table-1.

Table-1: A comparative chart showing Evolution of Dance in Telugu cinema

Decade	Dance Style	Key Characteristics	Representative Movies / Artists
1950s	Pure Classical (Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi)	Devotional themes, mythological narratives, temple backdrops	<i>Mayabazar</i> , <i>PathalaBhairavi</i> Lead: Savitri, NTR
1960s	Classical + Cinematic Adaptation	Refined choreography, emphasis on expressive abhinaya	<i>Lava Kusa</i> , <i>Sri Krishna Pandaveeyam</i>
1970s	Classical & Folk Fusion	Inclusion of rural dances, more dynamic folk steps	<i>Siri Siri Muvva</i> , <i>Seetamalakshmi</i> Lead: Jayaprada
1980s	Temple Dance / Semi-Classical	Mythological & artistic portrayal, traditional costume aesthetics	<i>Sankarabharanam</i> , <i>Megha Sandesam</i> Lead: Manju Bhargavi
1990s	Semi-Classical + Romantic Modern	Romantic duets with Indian folk & classical base, stylized song picturization	<i>Jagadeka Veerudu</i> <i>Athiloka Sundari</i> , <i>Premikudu</i> , <i>Roja</i>

2000s	Bollywood + Western Fusion	Western influence (hip-hop, salsa), modern settings, increased technical choreography	<i>Arya, Indra, Pokiri</i> Choreographers: Raju Sundaram
2010s	Contemporary Global + Freestyle	Urban dance forms, viral choreography, slick editing and high production value	<i>Dhee, Race Gurram, Ala</i> <i>Vaikunthapurramuloo</i>
2020s	Pan-Indian Spectacle & Global Sync	Large-scale cinematic dance numbers, global appeal, social media-ready choreography	<i>Pushpa</i> (“Srivalli”), <i>RRR</i> (“Naatu Naatu”) Lead: Allu Arjun, NTR Jr.

To conclude, the evolution of dance in Telugu cinema displays a beautiful adventure from conventional roots to modern improvements. exceptional regional dance forms inspired early choreography, giving cultural richness to storytelling. over time, current choreography brought in new styles and trends, adapting to changing audience tastes. Iconic dance songs and object numbers have become essential highlights of films, shaping megastar picture and mass attraction. Technological developments together with advanced camera work, modifying, and virtual outcomes further greater the visible presentation of dance. beyond entertainment, dance has served vital cultural and narrative roles, expressing emotion, devotion, and identity. lady choreographers have also won space within the enterprise, bringing sparkling perspectives and reshaping how testimonies are told through movement. With changing audience expectancies, dance keeps to conform as a key element of Telugu cinema. the adventure indicates how dance stays an effective tool of visual storytelling, blending culture with creativity across a long time.

CHAPTER IV

TRANSITIONS & TRANSFORMATIONS

Dance in Telugu cinema has undergone remarkable shifts over the decades, reflecting broader cultural, technological, and aesthetic changes. This chapter explores the dynamic journey of dance in Telugu films, tracing its evolution through different eras by examining iconic songs that marked key turning points. Each decade brought with it new stylistic trends, socio-political influences, and cinematic techniques that reshaped how dance was conceived, choreographed, and received. Central to this transformation was the vital role played by choreographers, whose creative vision and adaptability influenced the direction of cinematic dance. Their contributions not only introduced novel movements and styles but also helped integrate traditional forms with contemporary sensibilities. This chapter delves into these transitions, offering a chronological perspective on how dance in Telugu cinema has continually reinvented itself while retaining its cultural essence.

From mythological epics to modern urban romances and mass entertainers, dance sequences have:

- Showcased cultural identity through classical and folk traditions.
- Enhanced storytelling by conveying emotions, inner conflicts, or celebrations.
- Served as star vehicles that elevate the mass appeal of actors, especially since the 1980s.
- Reflected societal changes as modern influences like Western styles, hip-hop, and street dance entered Telugu film choreography.

1930s: The Mythological Genesis

The genesis of Telugu cinema is deeply rooted in mythological narratives, drawing heavily from epics like the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas. In the early decades of the 20th century, filmmakers turned to these sacred texts for inspiration, as they resonated strongly with the cultural and spiritual beliefs of Telugu-speaking audiences. The first Telugu talkie, *Bhakta Prahlada* (1931), directed by H. M. Reddy, was a landmark film that set the tone for mythological storytelling in the industry. The Telugu films from the 1930s to early 1940s reflect a rich and evolving tapestry of dance traditions, blending classical, folk, tribal, and regional influences. In *Harischandra* (1935), directed by T.V.S. Sarma, dance was used sparingly but meaningfully, in keeping with the mythological tone of the film. One notable sequence involves a group dance performed to welcome the king into the sabha. The choreography here is extremely simple, featuring basic synchronized hand gestures and minimal footwork, likely due to the early stage of cinematic dance evolution and the technical limitations of the time. Another key performance is by Hymavathi and Roshan Bhai as the “Matanga Kanyas”, which also consists of plain hand movements without intricate steps or expressive detailing. These sequences reflect the nascent stage of dance in Telugu cinema, where theatrical and symbolic movement took precedence over formal classical technique. Though modest in style, these dances played an important role in storytelling and marked an early effort to blend performance with film narrative, laying the foundation for more developed cinematic dance forms in later years.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KISPS4rbDnk>

Plate - 4.1: Dance sequence from movie *Harischandra* (1935)

From *Mala Pilla* (1938), " Nallavaade Gollapillavaade " was composed by Bhimavarapu Narasimha Rao, using lyrics by poet Basavaraju Apparao, and performed on-screen by Kanchanamala and Sundaramma . It's often credited as the first major mass-hit song in Telugu cinema, launching a trend of teasing, folk-inspired duets that remained popular for decades. The song appears in a scene where the two sisters, Sampalatha and Anasuya, sing and dance together, observed secretly by the hero, Nagaraju. It blends folk music sensibilities with simple, charming expressions in both lyrics and choreography. This film featured a rich collection of songs that blended folk melodies with strong social themes, reinforcing the film's message against caste discrimination. Apart from the popular duet "Nallavaade Gollapillavaade," other songs like "Aa Mabbu Ee Mabbu," "Jai Mahadev," "Jatara Setamu Ra," "Vaduku Vaduku," "Kuleelandaru Ekamu Kavale Ra," "Venu Manohara Ganamu," and "Savirahe Tavadeena" reflected rural life, devotional spirit, and the need for social unity. Composed by Bhimavarapu Narasimha Rao with lyrics by Basavaraju Apparao and Tapi Dharma Rao, these songs used simple, folk-based tunes and lyrics that connected deeply with audiences. Most songs were performed in naturalistic settings with minimal choreography, relying on expressive body language, group participation, and rhythmic movements common to village traditions, helping to portray the everyday struggles and hopes of common people in an engaging musical format.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTocimLRGHI>
Plate-4.2: Dance sequence from movie *Mala Pilla* (1938)

Malli Pelli (1939), a pioneering Telugu social drama directed by Y. V. Rao, includes a notable stage performance that showcases a distinct form of dance presentation. This scene features a solo female performer enacting a Natakam (dramatic dance performance) in front of an audience. Unlike the classical structures prevalent in traditional Indian dance forms, this sequence is characterized by its free-flowing hand movements, minimalistic footwork, and instrumental music accompaniment rather than lyrical compositions. The choreography is simple, aligning more with the aesthetics of early theatrical dance rather than codified classical forms. The dancer moves fluidly across the stage, incorporating elements like turns (pirouette-like spins), forward and backward movement, and dramatic halts in postures to emphasize emotional beats and narrative moments. This performance, although not rooted in a specific classical style such as Kuchipudi or Bharatanatyam, reflects the early evolution of cinematic dance where drama, music, and expressive body language were prioritized over rigid technique. It stands as an example of how pre-classical and theatrical dance forms influenced early Telugu cinema, contributing to the hybrid dance vocabulary that would evolve in Indian films in the decades to follow.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vs_T_xeheQ
Plate - 4.3: Dance sequence from movie *Malli Pelli* (1939)

Rythu Bidda (1939), directed by Gudavalli Ramabrahmam, is a socially driven Telugu film enriched with a powerful musical and performative framework. Featuring about 13 to 15 songs, the film blends themes of rural life, social protest, devotion, and dramatic narrative. Choreography was managed by N. Chimanlal and Vedantam Raghavayya, with Raghavayya not only choreographing but also performing in some significant sequences. Among the standout musical numbers is the patriotic and motivational “Raboku Rabokura Chandurooda,” sung by Tanguturi Suryakumari, and the emotional solo “Nidra Melkora Thammuda,” rendered by P. Suri Babu with lyrics by Kosaraju. The film’s highlight is the dance piece “Dasavatharamulu,” a pure Kuchipudi performance choreographed and performed by Vedantam Raghavayya. The piece showcases the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu through classical footwork, stylized abhinaya (expression), and intricate mudras (hand gestures), adhering to the traditional structure of Kuchipudi Yakshagana - based performance. Other songs in the film feature semi-classical and expressive dance sequences, where performers use Kuchipudi-inspired body language and mudras to visually interpret the lyrical content. These dances are less structured than “Dasavatharamulu” but still rich in expressive storytelling. Overall, *Rythu Bidda* exemplifies how classical dance, particularly Kuchipudi, was integrated into early Telugu cinema to support narrative depth and cultural identity.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBmdsxxLUWk>
Plate - 4.4: Dance sequence from movie *Rythu Bidda* (1939)

Table - 4.1: List of movies in 1930s dance transformations

S. No.	Name of the Movie & Year	Choreographed By	Song Name(s)	Remarks on Dance
1	Harischandra (1935)	T.V.S.Sarma	Group welcome dance, “Matanga Kanyas” (Hymavathi and Roshan Bhai)	Simple synchronized hand gestures, minimal footwork, symbolic theatrical movement, early cinematic expression
2	Mala Pilla (1938)	--	“Nallavaade Gollapillavaade,” “Aa Mabbu Ee Mabbu,” “Jai Mahadev,” “Jatara Setamu Ra,” etc.	Folk-based tunes, group participation, expressive natural body language, rural themes
3	Malli Pelli (1939)	--	Solo natakam dance (instrumental song)	Free-flowing hand movements, minimal footwork, expressive and dramatic, theatrical rather than classical
4	Rythu Bidda (1939)	N. Chimanlal & Vedantam Raghavayya	“Raboku Rabokura Chandurooda,” “Nidra Melkora Thammuda,” “Dasavatharamulu,” etc.	Strong Kuchipudi influence, especially in “Dasavatharamulu”; semi-classical, expressive narrative-based dance

1940s: Classical Consolidation

In the 1940s, Telugu cinema began exploring choreographed dance sequences, though the form was still in its nascent stage. The film *Bhookailas* (1940) features group dances that showcase coordinated movements with limited yet structured choreography. Notable songs like “Suumadolikelihali” and “Najanmale Edi” present early examples of group-based performance styles, where dance was integrated more as a visual accompaniment to music rather than narrative expression. These sequences, though not technically elaborate, reflect a transition from theatrical staging to cinematic visualization.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8PcAkyzcb>
 Plate - 4.5: Dance sequence from movie *Bhookailas* (1940)

Similarly, *Sumangali* (1940) offers one of the earliest instances of a female solo dance performance in the song “Vastade Maa Bhava”. The dancer’s expressions and body language indicate a clear departure from folk gestures toward more stylized, expression movements. As seen in the images above, these performances emphasized posture, costume, and ensemble harmony rather than technical virtuosity, laying the groundwork for the evolution of cinematic dance in Telugu films.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3-Jz7cLqYI>
 Plate - 4.6: Dance sequence from movie *Sumangali* (1940)

The dance in *Devata* (1941) reflects the evolving style of early Telugu cinema, where choreography was not yet formalized but carried folk and theatrical influences. The songs in the film often used simple, expressive movements rather than complex classical dance forms. For example, in songs like “Raitu Janamula Panduga”, “Radhe cheli nammaradhe cheli “ and

“Oogeda Uyyala,” the dance resembled village festival performances, with rhythmic swaying, hand claps, and group participation to represent rural life and celebration. These sequences were choreographed informally, guided by the director’s vision and the natural performance ability of the actors. The use of folk steps, graceful walking patterns, and symbolic gestures helped convey emotion, mood, or cultural identity rather than technical virtuosity.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EOBziI2Uyk&list=PLeg0Soq98eyV0gh35DOwHX5bNkOUCpmhU>
Plate - 4.7: Dance sequence from movie *Devata* (1941)

The film *Bhakta Potana* (1942/43) featured music composed and performed by Chittoor V. Nagaiah, with lyrics written by Samudrala Raghavacharya. The film's soundtrack includes around twenty devotional songs and poetic recitations that beautifully capture the spiritual essence of the saint-poet Potana. Among the most iconic songs is “Sarvamangala Naama Seethaaraamaa,” a soulful chorus that evokes humility and devotion through collective worship. Another popular track, “Idi Manchi Samayamu Rā Rā,” sung by Bezawada Rajarathnam, became widely appreciated for its uplifting and hopeful message. Nagaiah’s own rendition of “Paavana Guna Rama Hare” stands out for its emotional depth and powerful praise of Lord Rama. The song “Nammitinamma Seetamma,” performed by Hemalatha Devi, adds a personal touch of devotional longing, while the duet “Nanu Paalimpaga Chanudenchitiva,” sung by Nagaiah and Nalam Vanaja, blends poetic expression with a soft devotional tone. In addition to these, the film features several Padyam recitations, such as “Kaatuka Kantineeru,”

“Mandara Makaranda,” and “Ala Vaikunthapurambulo,” which draw directly from classical devotional literature and add depth to the film’s spiritual narrative. The dance form typically involved stylized, devotional movements, often echoing temple dance traditions or a more theatrical group presentation, emphasizing reverence and collective sentiment. This song would transition the audience into a state of solemn devotion or patriotic pride, often culminating in a visually impactful tableau.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIO5AB43e94&t=8504s>
 Plate - 4.8: Dance sequence from movie *Bhakta Potana* (1942)

“Raraa gokula Naadaa” is a classical devotional stage performance featured within the narrative of *Bhagyalakshmi*(1943). It depicts a young woman performing in praise of Lord Krishna before an audience, blending artistic devotion with dramatic storytelling. The setting imitates a Sabha (auditorium) space common in devotional or courtly performances of the time.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdJsB4IFTV&t=7780s>

Plate - 4.9: Classical Dance Performance from *Bhagyalakshmi* movie(1943)

In *Krishna Prema* (1943), several musical interludes such as “Krishna” and “Chilakaa Oopoladana” feature devotional and group-based choreography, highlighting mythological themes through expressive group dance formations, as seen in the accompanying visuals. The song “Raaraadaa Aatalaadi” showcases lively group interactions, emphasizing coordinated rhythm and circular folk-inspired patterns, a sign of evolving choreographic complexity.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmFCe2PDqPk>

Plate - 4.10: Classical Dance Performance from *Krishna Prema* Movie (1943)

By 1945, with *Swargaseema*, the art of cinematic dance saw significant refinement under the choreography of Vedantam Raghavayya. Bhanumathi, an iconic figure in Telugu cinema, performed in various expressive formats from solo pieces like “Manchidinamu” and “Menaka” to narrative-driven group sequences like “Rushyasrunga” and “Oh Na Raja”. These performances demonstrated her versatility in abhinaya, stylized gestures, and seamless transition between drama and dance. The film also included Veedhi Naatakam (Street Play) segment “Mohini Rukmangada”, where Bhanumathi’s portrayal combined theatrical heritage with cinematic finesse, as captured in the visual stills.



Photo courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n84k51Qfp78>
 Plate - 4.11: Dance Performance from *Swargaseema* movie(1945)

In *Mugguru Maratilu* (1946), Raghavayya continued to explore subtlety and folk infusion. “Eeroje” featured a solo with restrained movements and emotive expressions, while “Yellamma Thalleki” introduced a powerful folk song sequence that celebrated rural dance forms. “Marulu Neepaigontira” fused both narrative emotion and rhythmic storytelling, marking an important phase where folk and classical traditions found common ground on screen. The images highlight the costumes, hand gestures, and compositional framing typical of the era’s evolving dance vocabulary.

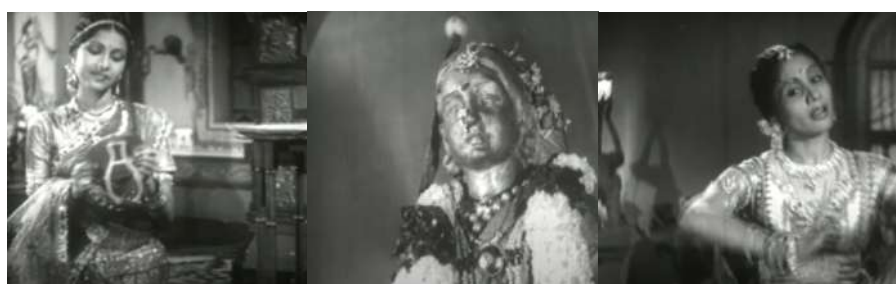


Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhiOYQh1SoI>
 Plate - 4.12: Classical Dance Performance from *Mugguru Maratilu* movie (1946)

Gollabhama (1947), directed by C. Pullayya, featured music composed by S. Hanumantha Rao and S. B. Dinkar Rao, with songs that reflect the early integration of music

and dance in narrative cinema. The soundtrack included melodious tracks like “Prema Sudha” (Krishnaveni), “Bhupati Jampitin” (Raghuramaiah), “Valapu Teniyalurina” (Krishnaveni), “Chandamama” (duet by Krishnaveni and Raghuramaiah), and “Ravoye Ravoye” (Krishnaveni), many of which were set in classical ragas such as Bilahari and Mohana. The duet “Chandamama” used rhythmic coordination between the leads, offering a visual balance between musical phrasing and character interaction. This film represents a transitional phase in Telugu cinema, where dance started becoming more integrated into the storyline, serving as a visual extension of the characters’ inner feelings, rather than existing as ornamental or theatrical add-ons. This is the first film starring Anjali Devi. Initially a part was shot under the direction of R. S. Prakash, but for some reason it was put aside and the whole film was completed again under the direction of C. Pullayya.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNW0IPryh7g>
 Plate - 4.13 : Dance Sequence from *Gollabhama* (1947)

Palnati Yuddham (1947), directed by L. V. Prasad, is one of the earliest Telugu films to blend musical richness with historical drama, featuring music by Galipenchala Narasimha Rao and lyrics by Samudrala Sr. The film included around 12 songs, most of them rooted in classical ragas, devotional compositions, or poetic verses aligned with the film’s historical and emotional tone. Among them, “Ee Kuhuraatri Naa Raju Vencheyunaa” sung by S. Varalakshmi stood out as the most iconic, reflecting a deep sense of longing and loyalty. In terms of dance,

the film represents an important phase of choreographic transition in Telugu cinema. The dances were not elaborate in terms of footwork or group formations, but emphasized abhinaya (facial expressions) and Lasya (graceful feminine movements), especially in the songs performed by the female characters. The songs are choreography by Vempati.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cb23w_aFZu8
Plate - 4.14: Dance Sequence from *Palnati Yuddham* (1947)

Even in 1947 the same trend of performing classical dance in the telugu movies continued in the movie . The song "Aparani Tapamayera" from the 1947 Telugu film *Yogi Vemana* stands out as a significant piece in the annals of early Telugu cinema. In "*Aparani Tapamayera*", the dance unfolds in a stage-like setting, portraying a deeply spiritual and reflective mood. The female dancer performs in the presence of Ghantasala (who appears in a rare acting role), and her movements echo the devotional content of the song. The choreography is grounded in classical dance traditions most likely Kuchipudi or Bharatanatyam with elegant postures, precise hand gestures (*mudras*), and expressive storytelling (*abhinaya*).



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdJsB4IFTV&t=7780s>

Plate - 4.15: Dance Scene from *Yogi Vemana* (1947) – Aparani Tapamayera

In the 1948 mythological fantasy film *Balaraju*, choreographed by Vedantam Raghavayya, dance was used as a gentle yet expressive medium to reflect divine grace and poetic emotion. The lead actress, Anjali Devi, brought elegance and subtlety to her performances. In the song “Navodayam Subhodayam”, her movements are soft, graceful, and aligned with the devotional mood of the sequence. The choreography avoids any overtly dramatic gestures and instead leans into minimalistic hand movements and gentle swaying, enhancing the spiritual atmosphere. Similarly, in “Teeyani Vennela Reyi”, her dance follows the same restrained aesthetic—subtle facial expressions (*abhinaya*), slow glides, and flowing arm gestures that mimic the moonlight's serenity referenced in the lyrics. The black-and-white visuals, complemented by delicate costume choices and Anjali Devi's emotive presence, highlight a transitional phase in Telugu cinema, where classical influences were adapted for screen with understated refinement rather than theatrical extravagance.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YbxUWqzhPs>

Plate - 4.16: Dance Sequence from *Balaraju* (1948)

The 1949 movie *Laila Majnu* includes some classical dance performances. The song "Nenu Gani Manasuna" is performed by two women using traditional classical dance. Their movements are graceful and expressive. Another song, "Jilibili", also features classical dance performed by a group of women. The dancers use hand gestures and facial expressions to match the mood of the song. These two songs bring beauty and emotion to the film.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdJsB4IFTVk&t=7780s>
Plate - 4.17: Classical dance performance in *Laila Majnu* (1949)

In the 1949 films *Keelu Gurram* directed by *Raja of Mirzapur*. The song "Aaha Aho Anandam" features classical dance elements, marked by structured hand gestures, coordinated footwork, and expressive abhinaya, reflecting traditional Indian aesthetics. In contrast, "Bhaagyamu Naadenoyi" and "Choochi Teeravakada" adopt a more spontaneous, free-style approach, characterized by lively steps and informal body movements that convey joy and energy. "Kaadusuma Kala Kaadusuma" presents a casual and relaxed dance style with simple, unembellished movements, aligning with the song's light and conversational tone. These variations in dance styles illustrate the experimentation and blend of tradition and creativity in early Telugu cinema.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8DjxxKg2QqM>
 Plate - 4.18: Dance scenes from *Keelu Gurram* (1949)

The 1949 film *Gunasundari Katha*, directed by K. V. Reddy, serves as a significant example of the evolving nature of dance in Telugu cinema during that era. In one of the songs, two dancers accompany the lead actress Sriranjani, performing movements inspired by the traditional Kuchipudi dance form. However, these movements are adapted to be more fluid and simpler, making them accessible while retaining expressiveness. Although their body movements are somewhat limited in complexity, they effectively convey a pleasant and clear storyline through graceful gestures and emotive expressions. This period also coincided with technological advancements in the film industry, including the introduction of better cameras capable of capturing finer details on screen. Such improvements allowed filmmakers to showcase intricate facial expressions and subtle body movements with greater clarity, enhancing the audience's experience and deepening their connection with the dancers' performances. This transition marked a shift towards more nuanced and detailed portrayals of dance, reflecting both artistic innovation and the impact of emerging cinematic technology.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dg8A9oDpz28>
 Plate-4.19: Dance sequence by Sriranjani in *Gunasundari Katha* (1949)

Gunasundari Katha (1949) movie has songs like "Pillagali," "Ore Ore Brahma Devudaa" popular song that often accompanied a regal procession or a scene of grand celebration, reflecting the splendour of mythological and historical films. The dance form was stately and majestic, often involving graceful, synchronized movements by a group of performers, sometimes incorporating elements of courtly dances or classical formations. These dances featured exaggerated expressions, folk-inspired steps, and light physical humor, reflecting the stage traditions from which many early Telugu films emerged. The choreography itself was minimal and largely uncredited, guided more by theatrical instincts than formal dance direction. Choreography was usually overseen by the director and relied on the aesthetic sensibilities of classical Indian arts. The film was directed by Kadiri Venkata Reddy.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auWCIfTXsuw>
Plate - 4.20: Dance sequence from *Gunasundari Katha* (1949)

Keelu Gurram (1949), directed by Raja Saheb of Mirzapuram and starring Akkineni Nageswara Rao alongside Anjali Devi, features a memorable soundtrack by Ghantasala with lyrics by Tapi Dharma Rao . The film includes 14 songs, among which "Aaha Aho Anandam," "Bhaagyamu Naadenoyi," "Choochi Teeravakada," and "Kaadusuma Kala Kaadusuma" stand out for their melodic range and vocal performances by Ghantasala, Krishna Veni, V. Sarala Rao, and P. Leela .Choreographers Vedantam Raghavaiah and Vempati designed the dance sequences, smoothly blending classical Lasya elements, folk-inspired gestures, and romantic

partner movements. In early solo songs like “Aaha Aho Anandam,” the emphasis is on emotive eye movements and delicate hand gestures, lending expressive depth without elaborate steps. Group sequences, such as in “Kaadusuma Kala Kaadusuma,” evoke folk traditions through simple rhythmic footwork and synchronized patterns. Duets like “Choochi Teeravakada” feature eye contact and mirror-like coordination, reflecting a gradual shift toward narrative-based choreography. This approach marks a transition in Telugu film dance—moving away from purely classical or theatrical displays and toward character-driven, culturally rooted choreography that enhances storytelling rather than interrupting it. The film ran for more than 100 days in 11 centers in Andhra Pradesh.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IQGn9paPAs>
Plate - 4.21: Dance sequence from *Keelu Gurram* (1949)

Table-4.2: List of Movies and dance transformations in 1940s

S.No	Name of the Movie & Year	Choreographed by	Songs / Performances	Remarks on Dance
1	Bhookailas (1940)	Not credited	“Suumadolikelihali”, “Najanmale Edi”	Group dances with early structured choreography, transition from stage to screen
2	Sumangali (1940)	Not credited	“Vastade Maa Bhava”	Female solo, stylized expressions, early move towards cinematic dance language
3	Devata (1941)	Informally choreographed	“Raitu Janamula Panduga”, “Radhe cheli nammaradhe”, “Oogeda Uyyala”	Folk-inspired group dances, rural festive mood, expressive gestures
4	Bhakta Potana (1942)	Not explicitly mentioned	“Sarvamangala Naama”, “Paavana Guna Rama Hare”, “Nammitinamma Seetamma”	Devotional sequences with temple/stage influence and collective choreography
5	Bhagyalakshmi (1943)	Not credited	“Raraa Gokula Naadaa”	Classical solo in sabha setting, devotional mood, stage-style choreography
6	Krishna Prema (1943)	Not credited	“Krishna”, “Chilakaa Oopoladana”, “Raaraadaa Aatalaadi”	Devotional & group dances with mythological storytelling and folk formations
7	Swargaseema (1945)	Vedantam Raghavayya	“Manchidinamu”, “Menaka”, “Rushyatrunga”, “Mohini Rukmangada”	Narrative dance, vedhi naatakam, expressive solo & group formats
8	Mugguru Maratilu (1946)	Vedantam Raghavayya	“Eeroje”, “Yellamma Thalleki”, “Marulu Neepaigontira”	Folk-classical fusion, emotional expression, subtle rural aesthetics
9	Gollabhama (1947)	Not credited	“Prema Sudha”, “Valapu Teniyalurina”, “Chandamama”	Early narrative integration, classical ragas, rhythmic coordination

10	Palnati Yuddham (1947)	Vempati	“Ee Kuhuraatri Naa Raju Vencheyunaa”	Emphasis on abhinaya and Lasya, devotional elegance in female performances
11	Yogi Vemana (1947)	Not credited	“Aparani Tapamayera”	Classical solo, devotional, stage-set feel, precise mudras and abhinaya
12	Balaraju (1948)	Vedantam Raghavayya	“Navodayam Subhodayam”, “Teeyani Vennela Reyi”	Subtle abhinaya, devotional mood, minimalism and elegance
13	Laila Majnu (1949)	Not credited	“Nenu Gani Manasuna”, “Jilibili”	Classical duets and group dance, expressive mudras and coordinated rhythm
14	Keelu Gurram (1949)	Vedantam Raghavaiah, Vempati	“Aaha Aho Anandam”, “Bhaagyamu Naadenoyi”, “Choochi Teeravakada”	Mix of classical, folk, freestyle—transitional choreography for narrative blend
15	Gunasundari Katha (1949)	Director-guided (K. V. Reddy)	“Ore Ore Brahma Devudaa”, “Pillagali”	Kuchipudi-influenced, stylized movements adapted for screen, narrative clarity

1950s: Dance- Drama and Cinematic Flourish

In the 1950 film *Jeevitham*, classical dance played a significant expressive role through the performances of Lalitha and Padmini, the celebrated Travancore sisters. The film includes multiple dance sequences such as the graceful duet “Chakkanaina Boya Rajuni”, which combines synchronized movements with dramatic expressions. A visually rich Marwadi Natyam-inspired piece, “Nandha Gopala Neetho Ne Aadudhaanoy”, features intricate hand gestures and costume design, evoking devotional playfulness. The film also includes an expressive instrumental dance showcasing emotive abhinaya and elegant body lines. In “Bhoomi Dunnaloy Rayeta Bhoomi Dunnaloy” the dancers mirror the urgency and emotion of

the song's lyrics with symbolic footwork and group harmony. "Aandhra Yugakka Neevi Jayamuraa" employs simple, emotive steps to convey a patriotic message, proving that even minimal movement, when performed with conviction and rhythm, can powerfully communicate meaning on screen.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WNf5L3uaj4>
Plate - 4.22: Dance sequence from *Jeevitham* (1950)

The film *Shavukaru* (1950), directed by L. V. Prasad, shows an important change in how dance was used in Telugu movies. Earlier films often used classical dance like Bharatanatyam or stage-style movements, especially in mythological stories. But *Shavukaru* was different it was a village-based social story, so the dances were more natural and looked like real village celebrations. In songs like "Deepavali Deepavali Intinta Ananda", the dance looked like a real festival with families moving together joyfully. It didn't have difficult steps but still felt lively and full of energy. Romantic songs like "Palukaradate Chilukaa" had soft, playful movements. The actors didn't do any hard choreography but used simple actions like eye contact, smiling, or small hand gestures to show their feelings. There were no professional choreographers, so the dance was mostly based on what fit the story and what the actors were comfortable doing. This movie showed how dance could be part of the story, not just something added for show. It helped start a new style in Telugu cinema folk-based and realistic dance, which became more common in the years after.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqI7EmGQZP0>
 Plate - 4.23: Dance sequence from *Shavukaru* (1950)

In *Palletoori Pilla* (1950), choreographed by Vedantam Raghavayya, dance becomes a vibrant reflection of rural life and dramatic storytelling, enhanced by the first pairing of ANR and NTR. The film opens with “Dheerakampana”, a regal performance staged in front of a king, where classical and dramatic dance techniques are used to express valor and emotion. A contrasting tone is seen in “Chitapata Chinukulu” a playful, rhythmically lively number that celebrates rural festivity and features regional folk elements in its footwork and formations. The film also includes instrumental dance segments, where group dances highlight synchronized folk choreography, traditional attire, and rhythmic percussive beats, creating an authentic village celebration atmosphere. Finally, the song “Vaddura Baboi” (1:55:20) stands out as a light-hearted and comical sequence, integrating expressive acting with dynamic folk movements. Through its blend of classical, folk, and dramatic styles, *Palletoori Pilla* showcases the evolving versatility of Telugu cinema choreography in the early 1950s.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3Yf4d3pbWw>
 Plate - 4.24: Dance sequence from *Palletoori Pilla* (1950)

In *Sri Lakshamma Katha* (1950), choreographer V. Raghavayya employed a classical framework to support the film's devotional and moral themes. A standout performance is the classical jathi sequence, showcasing structured rhythm patterns and traditional movements rooted in Bharatanatyam or Kuchipudi, marked by graceful posture and controlled footwork. The song "Thaalaga Jaalanu Ra" continues this tone with expressive abhinaya and precise hand gestures. In contrast, "Cheetiki Maatiki Chittemmante" introduces a lighter, more lyrical flavour blending simple, cheerful steps with playful expressions that bring a humorous and folk-like character to the performance. Together, these dances reveal the choreographer's ability to balance classical precision with narrative accessibility, contributing to the emotional and cultural richness of early 1950s Telugu cinema.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqFpkIk7L-A>
 Plate - 4.25: Dance sequence from *Sri Lakshamma Katha* (1950)

In the 1951 film *Malliswari*, directed by B. N. Reddy, the song *Pilichina* presents a notable example of dance transformation in Telugu cinema. In this sequence, the heroine performs a classical dance while the hero plays a musical instrument, creating a harmonious blend of music and movement. The dance retains strong classical roots, evident in the precise hand gestures (mudras), facial expressions, and rhythmic footwork typical of traditional forms like Kuchipudi or Bharatanatyam.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPw96StPG9k>
 Plate-4.26: Dance sequence from film *Malliswari* (1951)

In the 1951 film *Nirdoshi*, directed by H. M. Reddy, the song *Singari* is set in a bar where a lady sings accompanied by a group of people. The dance performed in this song

features simple and straightforward steps, reflecting a casual and accessible style that fits the lively bar atmosphere. Another song, *Suku Suku*, also takes place in a bar setting and showcases a first free-style dance performed by a female dancer. This performance emphasizes spontaneous and expressive movements, diverging from classical or highly structured choreography. The inclusion of these informal dance styles in a social setting like a bar highlights the diversification of dance in Telugu cinema during this period, marking a shift towards more contemporary and relatable portrayals of dance on screen.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aA8DrmNsp8g>
Plate - 4.27: Dance sequence from *Nirdoshi* (1951)

The 1951 film *Patala Bhairavi*, directed by K. V. Reddy, features several memorable songs with different dance styles. The song "Vinave Bala" is sung by a male singer and includes small dance steps, giving it a simple and expressive feel. "Theyyanu Uhalu" is a visually beautiful song performed by a group of girls, who do graceful group dance steps. "Ithihasam Vinara" is a dramatic song performed on a ground setting, presented like a *burra katha*—a traditional storytelling form in Telugu. One of the most classical performances is in the song "Vagalo Vagalu", where a lady performs pure classical dance, showcasing traditional expressions and movements.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bvnser_uAzQ
 Plate - 4.28: Dance stills from movie *Paatala Bhairavi* (1951)

The 1952 film *Dharma Devata*, directed by Pulliah, includes a total of 11 songs, many of which feature free-style dancing. One notable performance is "Lambaadi Lambaadi", a vibrant street-style dance performed by an artist that reflects the folk traditions and lively energy of rural life. Several other songs beautifully enhance the mood of different scenes through music and movement. A few sequences consist of pure instrumental music accompanied by expressive dance performances, without any lyrics, showcasing the actors' ability to convey emotion through movement alone.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFbqFZNf4I0>
 Plate - 4.29: 'Lambaadi Lambaadi' from *Dharma Devata*

The 1952 film *Palletooru* presents a rich blend of folk-inspired music and dance. The festive song "Vacchenandoy Sankranti" is performed by a group of villagers, using simple and

joyful dance steps to celebrate the Sankranti festival. The duet "Oo Mithari Dil Kathari" features a playful and energetic freestyle dance between a man and a woman, capturing the spirit of rural romance. Another song, "Korinadistadu", is performed by a girl with gentle and graceful steps, reflecting subtle expressions and charm rooted in village culture. Each of these songs highlights the beauty of Telugu folk traditions and natural surroundings through music and movement.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu7eBUYX-70>

Plate - 4.30: Dance sequences from *Palleteooru* Movie

In *Kanna Thalli* (1953), the choreography presents a fascinating fusion of traditional Indian forms and Western influences. The standout piece is the Yakshagana-style Dance choreographed by Krishnamurthy and Rajasulochana, supported by Balaram, Jayaram, and Ramarao Raju in the expressive number “Komale”. This performance, inspired by Karnataka’s Yakshagana tradition, features elaborate makeup, dramatic expressions, and mythological storytelling with bold hand gestures and vigorous movements. Uniquely, the film also experiments with Western stylistic elements. The instrumental piece includes westernized dance patterns with fluid body movements, costume variations, and ballroom-style formations marking a rare departure from the classical/folk dichotomy of early Telugu cinema. Additionally, the song “Vasta” offers a special blend of Indian melody with Western flair, where the dance exudes playfulness and cosmopolitan charm. This stylistic hybridity in *Kanna*

Thalli exemplifies the expanding aesthetic boundaries of Telugu film choreography in the early 1950s.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hJ_GK3-r2A
Plate - 4.31: Dance sequences from *Kanna Thalli* Movie

The 1953 film *Pakka Inti Ammayi* features 7 songs that mark a noticeable transition in the use of dance in Telugu cinema. Instead of classical or structured choreography, several songs in the movie follow a free-style dance format, with greater focus on natural movements and facial expressions. In the first song, a group of girls is seen enjoying a party, riding in a car, and dancing freely, capturing the joyful mood of matchmaking between a girl and boy. The lyrics humorously suggest that wherever you look, there are unmarried boys with different marriage preferences. Another song shows the heroine returning home from a trip with her friends and admiring the beauty of a rose—this song has minimal movement, relying mainly on gestures and expressions. In yet another emotional moment, the hero sings about his deep feelings for the heroine, expressing that life is meaningless without her. This song too carries no dance, using only subtle expressions to convey love. The film reflects a phase in Telugu cinema where dance was no longer central to all songs; instead, emotion, storytelling, and expression took the spotlight.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ownVrEVJ300>

Plate - 4.32: Just Expressions for a song in *Pakka Inti Ammayi* (1953)

The 1953 film *Pichipullayya* showcases a mix of folk-inspired and expressive cinematic dances that capture both cultural traditions and emotional storytelling. The energetic “Kollatam” sequence, featuring stick play, brings out the essence of rural group celebrations with rhythmic tapping, circular formations, and festive coordination. In contrast, the song “Anandame” focuses on expressive solo dancing, combining subtle gestures and graceful movements to evoke inner joy and devotion. Another notable performance is “Rarara”, which blends storytelling through music and movement, emphasizing facial expressions (abhinaya) and fluid choreography to complement the lyrical narrative.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvCArjPwphA>

Plate - 4.33: Dance sequences from *Pichipullayya* Movie (1953)

Aggi Ramudu (1954) features a rich variety of classical and theatrical dance sequences that reflect the evolving sophistication of cinematic choreography. Bhanumathi’s solo “Karunachudavalenu” opens with expressive abhinaya and classical dance movements, portraying emotion through hand gestures and controlled rhythm. The devotional “Rara

Yasodanandana” features Sai and Subbalakshmi performing Bharatanatyam in unison, wearing traditional costumes and displaying symmetry in movement and expression. Bhanumathi returns in “Evaropilicharu” and “Evaru Raa” , both of which highlight her mastery of subtle expression and graceful classical steps, effectively using dance as a medium of inner dialogue and emotional storytelling. A contrasting style appears in “Manduloi” ,where Sai and Subbalakshmi wore a tribal attire and perform a duet one portraying a male character combining dramatic flair with synchronized folk gestures. These performances in *Aggi Ramudu* exemplify the dynamic interplay of Bharatanatyam, abhinaya, and theatrical creativity in mid-century Telugu cinema.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WgKJPEvGxg>
 Plate - 4.34: Dance sequences from *Aggi Ramudu* (1954)

In *Pedda Manushulu* (1954), choreographed by Vedantam Jagannatha Sarma, dance plays a subtle but effective role in supporting narrative and emotional expression. One of the prominent sequences is the duet “Patnamellagalava”, where a couple performs folk-inspired steps in a light-hearted, teasing manner. The choreography is simple and expressive, featuring rhythmic movements and playful gestures, with the lyrics structured as a conversational exchange between the two characters. This reflects the influence of folk traditions in early Telugu cinema, particularly in portraying romantic and social interactions through dance. Another significant performance is “Nanna Puli” ,presented in the format of a *nritya nataka* (dance-drama) on a stage. In this piece, Vedantam Jagannatha Sarma and Master Narasimha Rao use expressive storytelling, incorporating folk-style movements and minimal footwork to narrate a dramatic episode. The presentation relies on expressive abhinaya and theatrical style,

emphasizing emotion and narrative clarity over technical dance precision. Both sequences highlight the integration of folk idioms and theatrical tradition in mid-century Telugu cinema, continuing the blend of regional cultural elements with cinematic storytelling.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z88AmygJBnM>
Plate - 4.35: Dance sequences from *Pedda Manushulu* (1954)

In the 1955 Telugu film *Ardhangi*, the song "Edche Vallani Edavani" showcases a lively free-style dance performance. Unlike traditional classical forms, this dance focuses more on natural, expressive movements that match the emotions of the song. The choreography captures the light-hearted and emotional mood through simple steps and strong facial expressions, reflecting the evolving trend in Telugu cinema during the 1950s where story and emotion began to influence dance styles.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PRBdvuLFrYQ>
Plate - 4.36: 'Edche Vallani Edavani', *Ardhangi* (1955)

The 1955 Telugu film *Dongaramudu* includes a mix of songs with minimal but expressive dance movements. The song "Rayoi Ma Intiki" is a light and cheerful performance by the hero and heroine, featuring simple dance steps that reflect everyday joy. "Telisinda Babu" is a charming song performed by a small child, also using basic movements to express innocence and playfulness. One of the more prominent dance pieces is "Bala Gopala", a stage performance in which a child artist delivers a classical dance, showcasing grace and traditional technique. The rest of the songs in the film rely more on expression and narrative flow, with limited dance choreography, highlighting the evolving storytelling approach of that era.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2olm3Tzr6s>
Plate - 4.37: Dance sequences from, *Dongaramudu* (1955)

The 1955 film *Missamma* beautifully blends classical and simple dance styles within its musical numbers. The song "Balanu Ra" features a solo classical dance performed by the heroine, showcasing refined expressions and traditional movements. In "Brindavamanamadi," the hero sings while the heroine accompanies him with graceful and minimal dance steps, creating a soft romantic mood. The song "Sreejanaki" is performed by a group of girls, using coordinated yet light movements, highlighting group choreography in a devotional setting. In "Telusukonave," the heroine dances with simple classical steps while the hero plays a musical instrument and sings, enhancing the emotional and artistic depth of the sequence. The film stands out for its musical storytelling, combining dance with character-driven performances.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1r2s7iqyJ8>

Plate - 4.38: Dance Sequences – From *Missamma* (1955)

The 1956 Telugu film *Jayam Manade* features several songs that highlight free-style dance, reflecting the shift towards more natural and expressive movements in mid-1950s cinema. Songs like "Veeragandham," "Chooda Chakkani," "Chilakanna," and "Vasthundi Vasthundi" are all performed with free-flowing dance steps, focusing on rhythm, spontaneity, and character expression rather than strict classical choreography. These performances capture the lively energy of the film and mirror the evolving dance trends of the time.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9j0JdFcI2qA>

Plate - 4.39: Dance sequences from *Jayam Manade* (1956)

The 1956 film *Chintamani* is rich in padyams and melodious songs, reflecting a traditional theatrical style. The song "Melaye" features a classical dance performed by a lady, marked by graceful movements and charming expressions that enhance the emotional depth of the performance. Throughout the film, dance is woven into the narrative using simple steps that rely heavily on facial expressions and hand gestures, capturing the mood of each scene. Rather than elaborate choreography, the focus remains on expressive storytelling through movement, in line with the cultural aesthetics of the time.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2YCYMmvxB0&pp=0gcJCdgAo7VqN5tD>

Plate - 4.40: Images from the movie *Chintamani* (1956)

Directed by K. B. Tilak, the 1956 film *Muddubidda* features songs that beautifully incorporate folk and simple dance styles. The lively group song "Tellukutindi" is performed with folk dance movements, where a group of people dances joyfully with the accompaniment of traditional musical instruments, capturing the spirit of community celebration. In "Chitti Potti," a lady gently dances while holding a baby toy, using simple and tender steps that reflect maternal affection and warmth. The duet "Orori" is performed by a lady and a gentleman with minimal but expressive dance steps, blending emotion with soft rhythm. These performances emphasize expression and cultural aesthetics rather than complex choreography, aligning with the film's thematic tone.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peoEXBTcnoA>

Plate - 4.41: Dance Sequence in *Muddubidda* (1956)

The 1958 film *Badipantulu* presents a delightful mix of folk and simple dance performances that highlight the innocence and emotions of everyday life. The song

"Boochadama" is performed by a young girl, using simple dance steps filled with charm and childlike grace. In "Raka Raka," a duet featuring folk dance captures rural vibrancy and romantic playfulness. The emotional "Yemani Cheppanu" is performed by a lady in folk style, expressing deep feelings through rhythmic movement. "Ninna Monna" is a light and expressive duet with simple steps, performed by a lady and a gentleman. Finally, "Pillalamu Badipillalamu" features a group of children dancing joyfully with gentle and playful movements, symbolizing youthful energy and school life. These songs reflect the evolving style of mid-century Telugu cinema, focusing on emotion-driven, culturally rooted choreography.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z9JunPrineo>
Plate - 4.42: Dance Scenes from *Badipantulu* (1958)

The 1959 film *Appu Chesi Pappu Koodu* beautifully combines classical elegance with simple, expressive dance styles. The song "Joharu Gaikonara" features a solo classical dance performance by a lady, marked by graceful movements and refined expressions. In "Kalam Kani Kalam," two ladies perform with simple, synchronized dance steps, bringing charm and rhythm to the scene. The light romantic number "O Panchavennela" is a duet performed by a lady and a gentleman, using soft and minimal steps to enhance the gentle mood of the song. These dance moments reflect the film's balance between tradition and playfulness, characteristic of Telugu cinema in the late 1950s.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zy6m0oO4Ojw>
Plate - 4.43: Dance Sequences – From *Appu Chesi Pappu Koodu*

Table - 4.3: List of movies in 1950s and its dance transformations

Movie	Choreographer	Notable Songs/Sequences	Remarks
<i>Jeevitham</i> 1950	—	“Chakkanaina Boya Rajuni”, “Nandha Gopala Neetho”, “Bhoomi Dunnaloy”	Travancore sisters' duet; expressive and classical elements
<i>Shavukaru</i> 1950	—	“Deepavali Deepavali”, “Palukaradate Chilukaa”	Village realism; dances as part of the story
<i>Palletoori Pilla</i> 1950	Vedantam Raghavayya	“Dheerakampana”, “Chitapata Chinukulu”, “Vaddura Baboi”	Rural drama with expressive group dances
<i>Sri Lakshammamma Katha</i> 1950	V. Raghavayya	“Thaalaga Jaalanu Ra”, “Cheetiki Maatiki”	Classical structure with narrative variation
<i>Malliswari</i> 1951	—	“Pilichina”	Classical duet with instrumental harmony

<i>Nirdoshi</i> 1951	—	“Singari”, “Suku Suku”	Bar setting; early free-style female dance
<i>Patala Bhairavi</i> 1951	—	“Vagalo Vagalu”, “Ithihasam Vinara”, “Theyyanu Uhalu”	Mix of classical and theatrical group dances
<i>Dharma Devata</i> 1952	—	“Lambaadi Lambaadi”	Street-style folk; expressive instrumental pieces
<i>Palletooru</i> 1952	—	“Vacchenandoy Sankranti”, “Oo Mithari”, “Korinadistadu”	Sankranti festivity; romantic duet
<i>Kanna Thalli</i> 1953	Krishnamurthy & Rajasulochana	“Komale”, “Vasta”	Yakshagana and Western-influenced sequences
<i>Pakka Inti Ammayi</i> 1953	—	Party song, Rose song, Emotional solo	Shift to gesture-based, emotion-focused songs
<i>Pichipullayya</i> 1953	—	“Kollatam”, “Anandame”, “Rarara”	Folk rituals and expressive abhinaya
<i>Aggi Ramudu</i> 1954	—	“Karunachudavalenu”, “Rara Yasodanandana”, “Manduloi”	Blend of classical and dramatic performance
<i>Pedda Manushulu</i> 1954	Vedantam Jagannatha Sarma	“Patnamellagalava”, “Nanna Puli”	Folk duet and nritya nataka (dance-drama)
<i>Ardhangi</i> 1955	—	“Edche Vallani Edavani”	Emotion-driven dance with free movement
<i>Dongaramudu</i> 1955	—	“Rayoi Ma Intiki”, “Bala Gopala”	Child-focused dance and minimal expression
<i>Missamma</i> 1955	—	“Balanu Ra”, “Brindavamanamadi”, “Telusukonave”	Solo, duet, and group dances with feeling
<i>Jayam Manade</i> 1956	—	“Veeragandham”, “Chilakanna”	Free movement tied to character emotion
<i>Chintamani</i> 1956	—	“Melaye”	Song-driven narrative with expression
<i>Muddubidda</i> 1956	—	“Tellukutindi”, “Chitti Potti”, “Orori”	Songs reflecting maternal warmth and joy

<i>Badipantulu</i> 1958	–	“Boochadama”, “Raka Raka”, “Yemani Cheppanu”	Playful rural and emotional storytelling
<i>Appu Chesi Pappu Koodu</i> 1959	–	“Joharu Gaikonara”, “Kalam Kani Kalam”, “O Panchavennela”	Balanced solos and romantic duets

1960s: Expressive Acting and Female Lead Dominance

In many Telugu films of the 1950s and early 1960s, dance was used not to showcase technical mastery but to support the emotional narrative of a song. A clear example of this can be seen in “Chandamama Raave” from *Manorama* (1959), and “Raavoyi Chandamama” from *Missamma* (1962). In *Manorama*, the choreography in “Chandamama Raave” is subtle and emotive, aligning with the lullaby’s gentle and dreamy tone. The movements are slow, fluid, and expressive—dominated by Lasya, the graceful feminine style. The heroine performs soft hand gestures, head tilts, and measured steps, all designed to evoke affection and calm, rather than technical complexity. Combined with serene facial expressions and a softly lit indoor setting, the dance creates an intimate, soothing atmosphere. Similarly, in *Missamma*, “Raavoyi Chandamama” features folk-inspired Lasya movements performed by Savitri. Her expressions are soft and affectionate, reflecting the lyrics that call out to the moon with childlike wonder. Set in a rural courtyard, the dance feels organic and rooted in real village celebrations. In both cases, the choreography though not formally credited to any professional choreographer was likely guided by the director and designed to integrate naturally with the narrative, mood, and cultural setting. These sequences highlight a significant transition in Telugu film dance, where movement served character and emotion, paving the way for a more narrative-driven approach to choreography in the years that followed.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_A4oI0JUfQ

Plate - 4.44: Dance Sequences from *Manorama* (1959) and *Missamma* (1962)

In the 1960 Telugu film *Pelli Kanuka*, choreography was handled by B. Heerala and K.S. Gopalakrishna. The film features graceful and expressive dance sequences that enhance the emotional tone and narrative depth. In the song "Kannulato Palakarinchu", performed by the heroine Saroja Devi, the choreography is centered around expressive facial movements and subtle feminine gestures. Saroja Devi beautifully interprets the lyrical meaning with her soft eye movements, gentle hand gestures, and poised demeanour. The dance reflects a refined emotional tone, blending lyrical beauty with simplicity and elegance. The group song "Akkayaku Semantham" portrays a traditional family celebration, with a group of girls performing in sync. The choreography involves coordinated claps, gentle turns, and graceful movements, where the dancers move around the space with synchronized formations. Their expressions and actions reflect the festive lyrics, adding a cultural and rhythmic charm to the scene. In "Aade Paade Pasivada", Saroja Devi is seen enjoying the Diwali celebration with a child. The choreography here emphasizes natural, joyful movements that capture the essence of motherly affection and festive joy. The steps are minimal yet meaningful, highlighting interactions between the heroine and the child through expressive, everyday gestures. Overall, the choreography in *Pelli Kanuka* combines expressive classical elements with realistic, context-sensitive movement. It supports the storytelling through lyrical interpretation,

emotional expression, and cultural aesthetics, especially through the elegant performance of Saroja Devi. She is also called as actor of abhinayas.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAIpRzpZB9I>
Plate - 4.45: Dance Sequences from Pellikanuka (1960)

From Bhakta Jayadeva (1961), "Jaya Jagadeesha Hare" and "Yara Pitta Vanamalina" is a sublime devotional song, deeply rooted in classical Indian music tradition, showcasing a profound spiritual connection. The dance form was predominantly classical, specifically Bharatanatyam or Kuchipudi, characterized by intricate footwork, graceful adavus (basic dance units), expressive mudras (hand gestures), and profound abhinaya (facial expressions conveying emotion and narrative). The song typically transitioned the audience into a devotional or ethereal realm, often depicting a character's spiritual trance or a divine leela (play), with the dance providing a visual interpretation of the spiritual fervour. The choreography for such classical pieces would often be by renowned gurus of the time like Vempati Chinna Satyam or Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy, bringing their authentic classical expertise to the screen. The film was directed by P. V. Rama Rao.



Photo Courtesy:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWfhAFCIKOM&list=RDEWfhAFCIKOM&start_radio=1

Plate - 4.46: Dance Sequences from *Bhakta Jayadeva* (1961)

The song “Nannu Dochukunduvate” from *Gulebakavali Katha* (1962), sung by Ghantasala and P. Susheela, is a romantic duet that became highly popular for its poetic charm and melodic appeal. This song exemplifies a shift in Telugu cinema during the early 1960s, where romantic duets began favoring expressive, narrative-focused dance over technical complexity. By prioritizing emotional authenticity and using gentle, character-driven movement, this sequence helped solidify the trend of dance as a storytelling tool rather than a spectacle a stylistic evolution that deeply influenced subsequent romantic songs in Telugu films. The song "Nanna Dochukovante" is based on Abheri raga. The choreography was largely guided by the director's vision for a light and romantic feel, with contributions from choreographers like Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy or Vempati Chinna Satyam for their elegant stylization. The film was directed by Kamalakara Kameswara Rao.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7os6Ru_CuU&list=RDe7os6Ru_CuU&start_radio=1
 Plate - 4.47: Dance Sequences from *Gulebakavali Katha* (1962)

The 1963 mythological classic *Narthanasala*, directed by Kamalakara Kameswara Rao, features remarkable choreography by the legendary Vempati Satyam, a pioneer of the Kuchipudi dance form. His work in the film brought classical dance into cinematic prominence, blending tradition with visual storytelling. The dance sequences, particularly those involving Savithri as Draupadi and N.T. Rama Rao as Arjuna in disguise (as Brihannala), are notable for their precision, expressive abhinaya (emotive acting), and adherence to classical aesthetics. Vempati Satyam's choreography showcased graceful jathis (rhythmic patterns), elegant postures, and authentic Kuchipudi elements, elevating the film's narrative and cultural richness. His work in *Narthanasala* not only reflected mythological grandeur but also helped popularize classical dance on the silver screen, making it a milestone in the history of Telugu cinema dance. One of the standout moments is the song "Naravara Kaaruvara", a group dance sequence choreographed with intricate classical movements. Performed in the Virata Sabha setting, this song presents a vibrant ensemble of female dancers. Another notable group performance is the song "Sayyata Aadenule Vayari Mogga", where a group of young women dance joyfully, celebrating the spirit of femininity and festivity. The choreography here is lighter in tone but still rooted in classical aesthetics, featuring delicate footwork, graceful

swaying movements, and synchronized claps and turns. The dancers express playful emotions through subtle abhinaya, portraying the mood of light-hearted companionship and cultural celebration. This song showcases Vempati Satyam's ability to choreograph both intense classical pieces and graceful, semi-classical group numbers with equal finesse.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8V4n_WgfA2s
Plate - 4.48: Dance Sequences from *Nartanasala* (1963)

Mooga Manasulu (1964), directed by Adurthi Subba Rao with music composed by K. V. Mahadevan, features some of the most melodious and emotionally rich songs in Telugu cinema, including “Eenati Ee Bandhamenatido,” “Godari Gattundi,” “Muddabanthi Puvvulo,” and “Naa Paata Nee Nota.” The film’s soundtrack, rendered by legendary singers like Ghantasala and P. Susheela, explores themes of eternal love, reincarnation, and rural life. Dance in *Mooga Manasulu* marked a key moment of transition—choreographed by B. Hiralal and P. S. Gopalakrishna, it moved away from theatrical classical forms and embraced emotionally expressive, narrative-driven movement. Romantic duets like “Naa Paata Nee Nota” featured soft Lasya-inspired steps and intimate gestures, with the lead pair (Akkineni Nageswara Rao and Savitri) using synchronized body language and expressive eyes to convey deep emotional connection. Folk-themed songs such as “Godari Gattundi” and “Maanu Maakunu Gaanu” incorporated rustic group choreography using circular formations, hand claps, and rhythmic walking, capturing the spirit of village life. Even solo performances like “Mukku Meeda Kopam” used restrained, character-specific movements that highlighted inner

feelings rather than technical dance display. The overall choreography served the story's emotional tone and setting, demonstrating how *Mooga Manasulu* contributed to the transformation of dance in Telugu cinema from spectacle to subtle storytelling.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgOqLl6KqnE>
Plate - 4.49: Dance Sequences from *Mooga Manasulu* (1964)

Thene Manasulu (1965), directed by Adurthi Subba Rao, marked the first full-length colour social film in Telugu cinema, celebrated as much for its music by K. V. Mahadevan as for its emotional storytelling. Among its most iconic tracks are “Divinundi Bhuviki Digivache Paarijathame Neevai” and “Purushudu nenai putali,” sung by Ghantasala and P. Susheela. These songs—one evoking wonder and the other intimate affection reflected themes of love blossoming in rural settings. Dance choreography for these numbers, credited to B. Hiralal, demonstrated a shift from traditional classical styles to emotionally driven and narrative-anchored movement. In “Divinundi Bhuviki,” solo and duet moments feature gentle Lasya-influenced gestures, measured footwork, and expressive facial nuances that align closely with the poetic lyrics. The choreography rooted in character mood, colour-rich cinematography, and natural settings signaled a transformative phase in Telugu dance where folkloric charm, subtlety, and emotional authenticity became more important than technical grandeur.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3q7XI0LaDs&list=RD3q7XI0LaDs&start_radio=1

Plate - 4.50: Dance Sequences from *Then Manasulu* (1965)

Sri Krishna Pandaveeyam (1966), directed by N. T. Rama Rao, is remembered not only for its mythological storytelling but also for its melodious soundtrack and visually rich song sequences. The film's music, composed by T. V. Raju, features devotional and classical songs such as “Priyurala siggelane” and Nalani vadena all of which became quite popular. These songs are deeply rooted in Bhakti tradition and often praise Lord Krishna or speak of dharma, love, and sacrifice. In “Nallani Vadena,” a standout moment is the group choreography involving 10 to 12 dancers, moving in coordinated formations. This song blends classical steps with synchronized group movements, creating a visually grand and energetic performance. The inclusion of such group dances shows how dance in Telugu mythological cinema during the 1960s was evolving—not only preserving traditional forms but also embracing larger formations, dramatic staging, and expressive ensemble choreography to suit the medium of film. Unlike earlier mythological films that filmed dances as if they were stage performances, *Sri Krishna Pandaveeyam* used close-ups and dynamic movement to bring out more emotional and narrative depth through dance. This film represents how, by the mid-1960s, Telugu cinema balanced tradition with screen aesthetics, keeping classical forms alive while transforming

them into narrative tools suited for film. The choreography for such mythological grandeur was often from maestros like Vempati Chinna Satyam or Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNtWWNdF-YM&list=RDhNtWWNdF-YM&start_radio=1

Plate - 4.51: Dance Sequences from *Sri Krishna Pandaveeyam* (1966)

The song “Maa Oollo Oka Paduchundhi” from *Ave Kallu* (1967) is a playful and catchy number that became one of the standout songs of the film. Sung by Ghantasala, it features lively rhythms and humorous lyrics that describe the excitement of a beautiful young woman living in the same locality. The tune is light-hearted and has a teasing tone, making it an instant favorite among audiences. On screen, Superstar Krishna delivers a spirited and energetic performance. His dance in this song is casual and expressive, blending spontaneous body movements with folk-inspired steps. Rather than using classical dance, Krishna’s movements rely on natural footwork, swaying, and animated gestures, matching the playful mood of the lyrics. He often interacts directly with the camera or co-actors, creating a fun, conversational style of dance. This performance reflects a shift in Telugu cinema during the late 1960s, where actors began using dance to build character and connect with audiences, especially in comedic or romantic settings. Krishna’s lively expressions and rhythmic body language helped popularize this style of relatable, character-based dance, making this song not just musically but also visually memorable.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4KqdyvbhYA&list=RDP4KqdyvbhYA&start_radio=1
 Plate - 4.52: Dance Sequences from *Ave Kallu* (1967)

The 1968 film *Sukha Dukhalu* featured two timeless songs “Idi Mallela Velayani” and “Medante Meda Kadu” which became musical and visual highlights of Telugu cinema. Composed by K. V. Mahadevan, both songs showcased the emotional and folk-inspired variety of the time. “Idi Mallela Velayani,” sung soulfully by P. Susheela, is a tender romantic track filled with poetic imagery, and on screen, the heroine’s performance reflects Lasya-style dance, with slow, graceful movements and expressive facial gestures conveying longing and love. In contrast, “Medante Meda Kadu,” an early hit for S. P. Balasubrahmanyam, is playful and teasing, sung as a lighthearted duet with P. Susheela. The choreography in this song features folk-inspired steps, cheerful expressions, and interactive movements between the leads, evoking a village-style romantic banter. Both songs reflect the dance transition of the late 1960s, where expressive and mood-based choreography began to take precedence over classical form, using natural gestures, regional styles, and emotional storytelling to connect more deeply with audiences.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIIlrPKK4f8&list=RDCIIlrPKK4f8&start_radio=1
 Plate - 4.53: Dance Sequences from *Sukha Dukhalu* (1968)

The song “Madilo Veenalu Mroge” from the 1969 film *Aatmiyulu* is remembered for its beautiful music and emotional feeling. Sung by P. Susheela, the song shows the heroine’s inner thoughts and feelings. The steps are not heavy or dramatic but gentle and expressive, matching the mood of the song. This shows a change in Telugu cinema at that time—dance was no longer just for entertainment but became a way to express a character’s emotions. The scene uses simple lighting, hand gestures, and facial expressions to tell the story. It is an example of how dance in films started moving from stage-style to a more natural, emotional style, fitting well with the story.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVaxuHn0huo>
 Plate - 4.54: Dance Sequences from *Aatmiyulu* (1969)

Table-4.4: List of notable movies, songs with dance transformations in 1960s

Film & Year	Choreographers	Notable Songs	Dance Style & Description
Pelli Kanuka (1960)	B. Heerala, K.S. Gopalakrishna	"Kannulato Palakarinchu", "Akkayaku Semantham", "Aade Paade Pasivada"	Graceful and expressive sequences. In "Kannulato Palakarinchu", Saroja Devi portrays subtle feminine abhinaya with simple classical steps. The group song "Akkayaku Semantham" features coordinated claps and synchronized turns in a festive setting. In "Aade Paade Pasivada", natural movements depict a joyful Diwali celebration with a child, emphasizing emotional and realistic expressions.
Bhakta Jayadeva (1961)	Likely Vempati Chinna Satyam / P. Krishnamurthy	"Jaya Jagadeesha Hare", "Yara Pitta Vanamalina"	Classical devotional choreography rooted in Bharatanatyam/Kuchipudi traditions. Strong abhinaya, intricate footwork, and spiritual tone. Songs depict divine leelas and transcendental moods with visual storytelling of devotion.
Gulebakavali Katha (1962)	Possibly Vempati Chinna Satyam / P. Krishnamurthy	"Nannu Dochukunduvate"	Romantic duet with minimal classical styling. Emphasis on emotional narrative rather than technical complexity. Light movements driven by raga Abheri. Transition toward character-based expression in romantic songs.
Narthanasala (1963)	Vempati Satyam	"Naravara Kaaruvara", "Sayyata Aadenule Vayari Mogga"	Kuchipudi-based classical choreography. "Naravara Kaaruvara" features group dance in Virata Sabha, led by NTR as Brihannala, with rhythmic jathis and precise formations. "Sayyata Aadenule Vayari Mogga" is a semi-classical group number, celebrating

			feminine joy with swaying movements, claps, and abhinaya. Vempati's choreography elevated dance as narrative art in cinema.
Mooga Manasulu (1964)	B. Heerala, P.S. Gopalakrishna	"Naa Paata Nee Nota", "Godari Gattundi", "Mukku Meeda Kopam"	Emotional and folk-inspired movements. Romantic duets with lasya elements, subtle gestures. Group songs use circular village formations, claps, rustic imagery. Shift from classical spectacle to story-driven choreography.
Thene Manasulu (1965)	B. Heerala	"Divinundi Bhuviki", "Purushudu Nenai Putali"	First color social film. Choreography blends Lasya-based gestures with rural emotion. Narrative-driven steps and visual romantic charm. Emphasis on realism and poetic movement.
Sri Krishna Pandaveeyam (1966)	Vempati Chinna Satyam / P. Krishnamurthy	"Priyurala Siggelane", "Nallani Vadena"	Mythological grandeur with classical and group choreography. "Nallani Vadena" features large ensembles with rhythmic formations. Dynamic camera use enhances emotional storytelling through classical motifs.
Ave Kallu (1967)	Not specifically credited	"Maa Oollo Oka Paduchundhi"	Folk-inspired, lighthearted solo performance by Krishna. Casual body language and natural expressions reflect comedic tone. Transition to actor-driven expressive dance.
Sukha Dukhalu (1968)	Not specifically credited	"Idi Mallela Velayani", "Medante Meda Kadu"	Contrast between lasya-inspired romantic solo and playful folk duet. Movement highlights emotional authenticity over classical form. Songs use regional and expressive gestures.

1970s: Commercializing Cinema

The song “Idigo Idigo Prapancham” from the 1970 film *Maro Prapancham* is a powerful and thought-provoking musical piece that reflects the changing nature of society and human values. Composed by Madhavan and choreographed by Venugopal, the song stands out for its intense mood and message-driven presentation. Instead of using traditional or classical dance styles, Venugopal crafted a choreography that focused on expressive group movements, symbolic gestures, and stage-like formations. The dancers used slow, deliberate actions to show emotional struggle, social inequality, and inner conflict. This was a clear example of how Telugu cinema in the 1970s began to shift from entertainment-focused dance numbers to theme-based and meaningful choreography. The music by Madhavan added depth to the visuals with its dramatic tones and rhythmic build-up. “Idigo Idigo Prapancham” not only highlights a social message but also marks a step forward in the transformation of dance in Telugu films, blending theatrical expression with cinematic storytelling.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmIjnxQTn_g
Plate - 4.55 : Dance Sequences from *Maro Prapancham* (1970)

The 1971 film *Dasara Bullodu*, starring Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR), was a musical blockbuster filled with memorable songs that quickly became audience favorites. Hit

numbers like “Pachchagaddi Koseti,” “Ettaago Vunadi,” “Nallavaade,” “Chethilo Cheyyesi,” and “Oh Mallayyagari” showcased a wide range of musical moods from festive and romantic to deeply emotional. These songs also reflected a notable shift in ANR’s dance style. Known earlier for his graceful but limited movement, ANR embraced a more energetic, folk-inspired approach in this film. In songs like “Pachchagaddi Koseti,” he performed with rhythmic footwork, playful expressions, and synchronized group choreography, capturing the spirit of rural celebration. Even in romantic and emotional numbers like “Chethilo Cheyyesi” and its pathos version, the visual storytelling relied more on subtle expression and meaningful gestures than on classical dance. Choreography in *Dasara Bullodu*, especially by incorporating folk styles with cinematic rhythm, played a key role in transforming how male leads like ANR were presented in song sequences more relatable, expressive, and in tune with the tastes of a broader audience. This film marked an important phase in the evolution of male dance performance in Telugu cinema, blending folk culture, mass appeal, and star charisma.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0nA4N4uY20>
 Plate - 4.56 : Dance Sequences from *Dasara Bullodu* (1971)

The 1971 film *Prem Nagar*, starring Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR) and Vanisree, had many hit songs that were loved for their melody and emotional meaning. Songs like “Neeneekosam Velasindi,” “Le Le Le Naa Raja,” “Nenu Puttanu,” “Theta Theta Telugula,” “Kadaveththu Kochchindhi,” “Manasu Gaathi Inthey,” and “Evarikosam” showed different

moods—romantic, sad, playful, and thoughtful. In these songs, ANR’s performance showed a new style of expression. Instead of traditional or stiff dance steps, he used simple movements, meaningful looks, and graceful body language to match the song’s feeling. The song "Le Le Naa Raja" was remixed in the film *Xtra* (2004). In the song “Kadaveththu Kochchindhi” from *Prem Nagar* (1971), props like a pot and stick were creatively used in the choreography to add a folk touch, reflect rural culture, and support the natural, expressive dance style that blended with the storyline. “Nenu Puttanu” from *Prem Nagar* (1971), elements of rock 'n' roll style were subtly introduced into the choreography, marking a fusion of Western and Indian dance movements. While the overall presentation maintained ANR's graceful and composed screen image, the song included light hip movements, rhythmic swaying, and stylish walking inspired by Western pop culture of the time. These touches of rock 'n' roll in body rhythm and beat-matching steps represented the growing influence of Western dance styles in Telugu cinema during the early 1970s. This blend of traditional Indian expression with modern flair gave the song a fresh, stylish look, reflecting both cultural change and ANR’s adaptability to evolving cinematic trends.

The emotional songs like “Manasu Gaathi Inthey” and “Evarikosam,” the focus was more on his face and expressions, which connected deeply with the audience. This film marked a change in how ANR used dance and movement to express emotions rather than just performing for entertainment. It reflected the transition in Telugu cinema, where songs became part of the story and characters, and dance was used to show feelings in a natural, simple way.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxW_2ma0gXI
 Plate - 4.57 : Dance Sequences from *Prem Nagar* (1971)

The 1972 film *Badi Panthulu*, starring N. T. Rama Rao (NTR) and Anjali Devi, featured songs like “Bhoochdama Bhoochadu,” “Bharata Mataku,” and “O Rori Pollagada,” which reflected both emotional depth and patriotic fervor. In these songs, especially “Bhoochdama Bhoochadu,” the dance movements were minimal yet powerful, focusing on strong expressions and character portrayal rather than elaborate choreography. NTR, known more for his commanding presence than dance-heavy roles, used symbolic gestures, walking rhythms, and body posture to express authority, concern, and moral strength. In contrast, group dancers and supporting actors performed folk-inspired or dramatic formations in background scenes, especially in “Bharata Mataku,” which had elements of patriotic tableau-style staging. The film reflected a transition where dance in social and family dramas became more message-oriented and realistic, aligning with character-driven storytelling instead of relying purely on

entertainment. This subtle transformation helped convey values and emotions through movement, without needing classical or commercial dance routines.



Photo cCourtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bonrJy98H50>
Plate - 4.58 : Dance Sequences from *Badi Panthulu* (1972)

The 1973 film *Kanna Koduku*, starring Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR), Lakshmi, and Krishnam Raju, had several memorable songs like “Andhamaina Pillagadu,” “Kallatho Kaatesi,” “Lokam Sokam,” “Devudicchina Varamugaa,” “Unnadhi Naakoka Illu,” “Thinte Gaarele Thinaali,” and the special number “Nenu Nenena.” Among these, “Nenu Nenena” stood out as an item song, featuring a more glamorous and energetic dance style, different from the emotional or family-based songs in the rest of the film. The choreography in this song included lively expressions, bold movements, and fast-paced music, showing the growing trend of adding such songs for entertainment and commercial appeal. While the rest of the film used simple, expressive dance steps to match the emotional scenes and characters, “Nenu Nenena” brought in a contrasting modern and stylish performance, marking a shift in Telugu cinema where item songs started becoming a regular feature alongside story-based dances.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEfW6eytBeI>
Plate - 4.59 : Dance Sequences from *Kanna Koduku* (1973)

The 1974 Telugu film *Jeevana Jyothi*, directed by K. Viswanath and starring Sobhan Babu and Vanisri, featured music by K. V. Mahadevan with songs like “Muddula Maa Babu,” “Sinni O Sinni,” “Endukante Emi Cheppanu,”. In these numbers, choreography by Raju and Seshu moved dance away from elaborate classical routines and shifted toward expressive storytelling. They used natural gestures, meaningful group formations, and relaxed footwork rather than spectacle—matching the film’s emotional narrative. Actors like Sobhan Babu and Vanisri conveyed feelings through facial expressions and subtle movement, while dancers in songs like “Sinni O Sinni” brought life and energy with rhythmic yet character-driven choreography. This approach marked a step in Telugu cinema’s shift toward using dance as a narrative tool, blending emotion, culture, and character into song sequences.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWmb69vgRDw>
 Plate - 4.60: Dance Sequences from *Jeevana Jyothi* (1975)

The 1976 film *Siri Siri Muvva*, directed by K. Viswanath, is a landmark movie in Telugu cinema that beautifully blends music, dance, and storytelling. Starring Jayaprada and Chandramohan, the film features popular songs like “Jumandi Nadam Saagipo Nadam,” “Andaniki Andam Ee Muvvalu,” and “Radigira Radigira.” The music was composed by K. V. Mahadevan, and each song was deeply connected to dance and emotion. In these songs, especially “Jumandi Nadam,” dance was not just for entertainment it was used to show the inner feelings, cultural identity, and growth of the character played by Jayaprada. The choreography, done by Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy and Raju–Seshu, mixed Kuchipudi and cinematic dance styles, allowing classical dance to be expressed in a natural, film-friendly way.

This film marked a major transition in Telugu cinema, where dance became part of the storytelling, helping the audience understand the character's journey through expression, rhythm, and movement.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m44mM7E8b5g>
Plate - 4.61 : Dance Sequences from *Siri Siri Muvva* (1976)

In 1977, Telugu cinema offered several standout songs that combined melody with evolving dance styles. Films like *Adavi Ramudu* featured hits such as “Ammathodu Abbathodu”, “Krushi Vunte Manushulu Rushulautaru”, and “Aaresukoboyi Paaresukunnu”, picturized on N.T. Rama Rao (NTR) and Jayaprada; these sequences wove village-folk energy and rhythmic group choreography into the rugged forest backdrop .

K. Raghavendra Rao played a major role in the transformation of dance presentation in Telugu films, especially from the late 1970s through the 1990s. His direction brought a grand, colorful, and visually rich style to song sequences. Before his time, dance in Telugu films was often story-based or expression-focused, but Raghavendra Rao introduced a new commercial format where songs became visually spectacular, using exotic locations, vibrant costumes, and symbolic props like flowers, fruits, bangles, and mirrors to enhance beauty and rhythm. He worked closely with choreographers to make sure each dance not only suited the music but also highlighted the hero and heroine's charm and chemistry. While classical and folk elements were still present, his style gave more importance to cinematic appeal, glamour, and mass audience connection. Especially in films with stars like Sridevi, Jayaprada, Nagarjuna,

Venkatesh, and Chiranjeevi, his songs often became major hits due to their innovative visuals and stylish choreography, setting a trend that many directors followed later. Through his direction, dance in Telugu cinema became a blend of storytelling, romance, and visual delight, reaching new commercial heights.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJMJSIIlye0>
Plate - 4.62 : Dance Sequences from *Adavi Ramudu* (1977)

In 1978, Telugu cinema featured several memorable songs that blended strong musical appeal with evolving dance styles. *Maro Charitra*, directed by K. Balachander, gave us the iconic romantic track “Ye Theega Poovuno”, picturized on Kamal Haasan and Saritha, where the choreography emphasized natural, emotion-led movement, using subtle arm gestures, graceful walking, and facial expressions to convey the characters' deep emotional longing. Another standout song from the film, “Bhale Bhale Magadivoy,” showcased Kamal Haasan’s unique dance style, blending light classical elements with expressive modern body language. Unlike the more static or stage-like dance of earlier decades, Kamal brought a fluid, cinematic rhythm with clean footwork, flexible body movements, and seamless transitions between steps and expressions. Both songs were choreographed by Saleem, a well-known choreographer of the time, who played a key role in shaping cinematic dance into a storytelling tool. Unlike the static or staged dances of earlier decades, Saleem's choreography allowed actors like Kamal to bring a fluid, actor-driven rhythm into the songs through flexible body movement, smooth

transitions, and character-based expressions. This marked a significant shift in Telugu cinema, where dance became emotionally connected and visually dynamic, paving the way for the energetic styles of the 1980s.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bIU01xtU8>
Plate - 4.63 : Dance Sequences from *Maro Charitra* (1978)

Songs like “Aaku Chaatu Pinde Tadise,” “Bangaru Baathuguddu,” and “Jaablitho Cheppanaa” from the 1979 hit film *Vetagadu*, directed by K. Raghavendra Rao and starring N. T. Rama Rao and Sridevi, became iconic for their playful, rhythmic choreography and rich visual presentation. The songs were choreographed by Saleem, who skillfully blended folk, cinematic, and stylish group dance formations. These songs marked a significant dance transition for Sridevi, who moved from her earlier classical-influenced roles to more cinematic, expressive, and glamorous performances. Her movements became more fluid and bold, with an emphasis on grace, screen presence, and romantic expressiveness, while still retaining her strong foundation in classical dance. The retro-style dance performed by Jayamalini and N. T. Rama Rao (NTR) in the song “Puttintollu Tarimesaru” from the 1979 film *Vetagadu*, marked a stylish shift in Telugu cinema toward modern cinematic glamour. This song, choreographed by Saleem, blended Western cabaret influence with native cinematic rhythm, presenting Jayamalini in a bold and expressive avatar. Dressed in shimmering costumes, she performed fast-paced, rhythmic movements, while NTR, known more for mythological and patriotic roles,

adapted with stylized gestures, graceful walking, and sharp screen timing. The song "Aaku Chaatu" became hugely popular and was remixed in *Allari Ramudu*.

Director K. Raghavendra Rao brought in special visual elements that became his signature style using props like flowers, fruits, bangles, and mirrors within the dance sequences to enhance beauty, rhythm, and romance. He also made use of exotic outdoor locations, slow-motion shots, and vibrant costumes to create a visual feast for viewers. Under his direction, dance was not just a part of the song it became a full cinematic experience blending glamour, storytelling, and emotional expression. This approach redefined how songs were filmed and presented in Telugu cinema and had a lasting impact on how heroines like Sridevi were showcased through dance.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gV_VM55IQO4
Plate - 4.64 : Dance Sequences from *Vetagadu* (1979)

During the time of ANR and NTR, dance in Telugu cinema was mostly based on expressions, graceful gestures, and classical influence. ANR, who began his career in the 1940s, brought a major transformation by slowly adapting from theatrical-style acting to more naturalistic screen presence and movement-based expression. Over the decades, especially by the 1960s and 70s, he embraced light romantic steps, folk movements, and expressive walking patterns, showing

that dance could be both elegant and character-driven. While NTR showcased powerful classical and mythological dance, especially in devotional roles, ANR focused on emotional storytelling through subtle choreography. In the 1970s, with stars like Krishna and Sobhan Babu, dance further shifted towards simpler, folk-based, and realistic styles, matching the mood of family and social dramas. But the real turning point came in the 1980s with Chiranjeevi, who brought a new energy and technical brilliance to Telugu film dance. He combined breakdance, folk, cinematic steps, and perfect rhythm, making dance a highlight and commercial strength in movies. Thus, Telugu cinema evolved from expression-based movement to dynamic choreography, thanks to these stars across generations.

In early Telugu cinema from the 1940s to the 1950s, there were no separate choreographers for most films. Dance was not seen as a major part of the film yet, so it was usually directed by the film director or sometimes the music director, depending on the mood of the song. The movements were simple, often based on folk or classical traditions, and matched the story and emotion. As films became more musical in the 1950s and 60s, dedicated choreographers like Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy (a Kuchipudi master) and Heeralal started working on classical and expressive dances in films like *Maya Bazaar* and others. By the 1970s, choreographers like Venugopal and Chinni-Sampath began creating more structured dances that blended folk, classical, and cinematic styles, especially for stars like ANR, NTR, Krishna, and Sobhan Babu. They kept the dances simple yet expressive, matching the film's story and setting. In the 1980s, as dance became more important in films, choreographers like Siva Shankar Master, Saleem, and Prabhakar brought in energetic, modern styles including breakdance, disco, and fast beats, especially for actors like Chiranjeevi, who changed the dance trend completely. So over time, Telugu cinema moved from director-guided dances to professional choreography, showing a big transformation in how dance was created and presented on screen.

Table - 4.5 : List of notable movies, songs and its dance transitions

Year & Film	Dance songs	Dance Transition Highlights
1970 Maro Prapancham	Idigo Idigo Prapancham	Theme-based choreography; expressive group movements; symbolic gestures; shift from entertainment to message-driven dance
1971 Dasara Bulodu	Pachchagaddi Koseti, Ettaago Vunadi, Nallavaade, Chethilo Cheyyesi, Oh Mallayyagari	Energetic folk-inspired moves by ANR; playful expressions; shift in male dance representation
1971 Prem Nagar	Neeneekosam Velasindi, Le Le Le Naa Raja, Nenu Puttanu, Theta Theta Telugula, Kadaveththu Kochchindhi, Manasu Gaathi Inthey, Evarikosam	Neeneekosam Velasindi, Le Le Le Naa Raja, Nenu Puttanu, Theta Theta Telugula, Kadaveththu Kochchindhi, Manasu Gaathi Inthey, Evarikosam
1972 Badi Panthulu	Bhoochdama Bhoochadu, Bharata Mataku, O Rori Pollagada	Minimal movement with deep emotion; symbolic gestures by NTR; tableau-style patriotic group staging
1973 Kanna Koduku	Andhamaina Pillagadu, Kallatho Kaatesi, Lokam Sokam, Devudicchina Varamugaa, Unnathi Naakoka Illu, Thinte Gaarele Thinaali, Nenu Nenena	Family-oriented dance with emotional expression; contrast with “Nenu Nenena” item number showing glamor and boldness
1975 Jeevana Jyothi	Muddula Maa Babu, Sinni O Sinni, Endukante Emi Cheppanu	Shift to natural gestures; relaxed footwork; narrative-driven group choreography
1976 Siri Siri Muvva	Jumandi Nadam, Andaniki Andam Ee Muvvalu, Radigira Radigira	Kuchipudi-cinematic blend; emotional storytelling through classical forms; strong character expression
1977 Adavi Ramudu	Ammathodu Abbathodu, Krushi Vunte Manushulu Rushulautaru, Aaresukoboyi Paaresukunnu	Folk-based cinematic choreography; grand visuals; use of props like flowers/fruits; Raghavendra Rao’s commercial style emerges
1978 Maro Charitra	Ye Theega Poovuno, Bhale Bhale Magadivoy	Emotionally connected movement; Kamal Haasan’s modern, fluid style with actor-driven storytelling
1979 Vettagadu	Aaku Chaatu Pinde Tadise, Bangaru Baathuguddu, Jaablitho Cheppanaa, Puttintollu Tarimesaru	Glamorous choreography; folk-disco blend; Sridevi’s transition to screen-centric dance; use of retro style and cabaret-inspired visuals

1980s: The Dancing Hero Revolution

The 1980s marked a transformative era in Telugu cinema, especially in the realm of dance. This period witnessed the infusion of Western dance styles like disco and breakdance into mainstream Telugu films, largely influenced by the charismatic performances of Chiranjeevi. Below is an in-depth look at some iconic songs from this era, highlighting their dance forms, choreography, and cultural impact.

The 1980 film *Sankarabharanam*, directed by K. Viswanath, is a landmark in Telugu cinema for its strong focus on classical music and dance. The film features timeless songs like “Dorakunaa Ituvanti Seva,” “Sankara Naadha Sareera,” “Brochevarevarura,” and “Omkaara Naadam,” composed by K. V. Mahadevan. These songs are based entirely on Carnatic ragas and are beautifully sung by S. P. Balasubrahmanyam and Vani Jayaram. The movie’s choreography, handled by Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy, a noted Kuchipudi expert, and others like Raju-Seshu, played a key role in showing the grace, discipline, and emotional depth of classical dance. Dancer and actress Manju Bhargavi gave a powerful performance with pure Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi techniques, filled with strong expressions (*abhinaya*) and perfect rhythm (*laya*). The 1981 film *Ooriki Monagadu*, directed by K. Raghavendra Rao and starring Krishna and Jayaprada, featured hit songs like “Kadili Randi Manushulaithe,” “Idigo Tella Cheera Avigo Malle Poolu,” and “Moggapinde,” with music by K. Chakravarthy and lyrics by Veturi. These songs showcased a notable shift toward dance that was more cinematic and character-driven, while retaining folk energy and rhythmic group dynamics. Choreographed by Saleem, the sequences used naturalistic footwork, expressive hand gestures, and synchronized ensemble movements, moving away from traditional classical forms toward a style that matched on-screen personality and storyline. Krishna’s performance became more energetic and screen-friendly, while Jayaprada brought grace and charm in her steps. Raghavendra Rao enhanced the dance sequences with vibrant sets, props, and camera work

close-ups, wide-group shots, and colorful backdrops elevating them into visually rich moments. This film played a key role in evolving Telugu film dance, blending folk rhythms with cinematic glam, and aligning movement more closely with emotional and narrative needs.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUSpB6Cxu4k>
Plate - 4.65: Dance Sequences from *Ooriki Monagadu* (1981)

“Elluvachi Godaramma” from the 1982 film *Devatha*, starring Sobhan Babu and Sridevi, stands as an important milestone in Telugu cinema’s dance evolution. Directed by K. Raghavendra Rao and choreographed by Saleem, the song is celebrated for its vibrant blend of traditional Telugu folk dance with modern cinematic style. Set to K. Chakravarthy’s lively musical score, the choreography used lively footwork, expressive group formations, and rural-inspired hand gestures, while also incorporating camera-friendly movements, syncopated beats, and stylish expressions that appealed to urban audiences.

Sridevi’s performance in particular reflected a clear dance transition—from her earlier classical expressions to a more cinematic, folk-glam fusion. Dressed in colorful ethnic attire, she performed with energy, charm, and grace, while Sobhan Babu complemented her with light yet confident movements. The use of props like pots, bangles, and village-themed sets, along with synchronized background dancers and wide-angle shots, became a trademark of Raghavendra Rao’s direction. This song not only highlighted the flexibility of Telugu dance traditions, but also showcased how commercial cinema could elevate folk culture into mass entertainment without losing its roots.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUxGZaoMDVY>
 Plate - 4.66: Dance Sequences from *Devata* (1983)

Another standout romantic number was "Emani Ne Cheli Paduduno" from *Mantri Gari Viyyankudu* (1983), a duet between Chiranjeevi and his co-star. With Ilaiyaraaja's soulful music in the background, Chiranjeevi's performance blended elegance with emotion. His subtle movements, timed perfectly with the melody, demonstrated how dance could be used not just for spectacle, but to deepen character and advance narrative, a concept relatively new to Telugu cinema at the time.

"Navvindi Mallechendu" – *Abhilasha* (1983) This romantic duet from *Abhilasha* beautifully captures the emotional undertone of youthful love and longing. Set to a lilting melody by Ilaiyaraaja, the song provided an ideal canvas for Chiranjeevi to showcase his expressive finesse. His nuanced facial expressions and gentle body language conveyed the sincerity and subtle intensity of the romantic narrative. The choreography, though restrained, was marked by elegant arm movements and intimate gestures that complemented the lyrical depth of the song. At a time when loud and flamboyant performances were common, this understated romantic piece allowed Chiranjeevi to establish himself as an actor capable of emotional depth and sensitivity, expanding his image beyond that of an action star.



Photo courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82hUDmPYazk>
 Plate - 4.67: Dance Sequence from *Abhilasha* (1983)

In the 1984 film *Challenge*, the song "Induvadana" marked a significant shift in Telugu cinema by integrating dance as a narrative and expressive tool. Featuring Chiranjeevi in the lead and composed by the legendary Ilaiyaraaja, this romantic number showcased a blend of disco-inspired rhythm with emotive storytelling. Though specific choreographic credits remain undocumented, the dance movements were likely contemporary and fluid, perfectly complementing the song's romantic tone. Chiranjeevi's graceful yet powerful performance, marked by expressive gestures and well-controlled body language, set a new benchmark for male dance leads in Telugu films, proving that dance could be both artistically rich and accessible to the masses.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NObkrfw1RU>
 Plate - 4.68: Dance Sequences from *Challenge* (1984)

One of the most iconic examples of this transformation is "**Golimaar**" from *Donga* (1985), where Chiranjeevi's electrifying performance introduced breakdance to Telugu audiences. Inspired directly by Michael Jackson's "Thriller," the song featured sharp, robotic movements and tightly synchronized group choreography, earning it the nickname "Indian Thriller." Composed by K. Chakravarthy, *Golimaar* became a cultural phenomenon, pushing the boundaries of what dance could represent in Indian cinema.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2tOlfLEHZI>

Plate- 4.69: Dance sequence from *Donga*(1985) inspired from Micheal Jackson's *Thriller*

In the mid-1980s, Telugu cinema witnessed a revolutionary shift in dance choreography and style, thanks in large part to the dynamic presence of Chiranjeevi.

This wave of innovation continued with "Merupula La La La" from *Attaku Yamudu Ammayiki Mogudu* (1989), where Chiranjeevi's freestyle energy and disco influences lit up the screen. His charisma and athletic choreography in this solo number resonated widely with fans, affirming his growing image as a dance icon in Telugu film. Similarly, in "Padaharella Vayasu" from *Lankeshwarudu* (1989), Chiranjeevi showcased a more romantic and expressive side, proving his versatility through gentle, emotive dance movements that beautifully matched the

song's soft emotional undercurrent. The choreography emphasized elegance and grace, reinforcing dance as a vital storytelling medium.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sAzZP1q3do>

Plate - 4.70: Dance sequence from *Attaku Yamudu Ammayiki Mogudu* (1989)



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsnOGypjHI0>

Plate - 4.71: Dance sequence from *Lankeshwarudu* (1989)

Adding further dimension to his breakdance identity, Chiranjeevi starred in "One Two Three Four" from *State Rowdy* (1989), composed by the legendary Bappi Lahiri. This track built on Western pop and breakdance styles, complete with sharp angles and bouncy rhythms. The song's catchy beat and youthful energy cemented Chiranjeevi's reputation as the actor who could seamlessly fuse East and West in movement and music.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Psj55YTqNdI>
 Plate - 4.72: Dance sequence from *State Rowdy* (1989)

"Star Star Megastar" – *Kodama Simham* (1990) This pulsating dance number from *Kodama Simham* was a bold celebration of Chiranjeevi's star power. Framed within a Western cowboy setting, the song's title itself was a declaration of the actor's rising superstardom. The choreography was crafted to magnify his dynamic screen presence—featuring sharp hand gestures, swagger-filled movements, and infectious footwork. Backed by a chorus of dancers and cinematic framing that emphasized his centrality, the performance echoed mass appeal. Chiranjeevi's energetic delivery and charismatic engagement with the camera made this song not just a musical highlight, but a defining moment in cementing his identity as the "Megastar" of Telugu cinema.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAI-5qVaFu0>
 Plate - 4.73: Dance sequence of song "Star Megastar" from *Kodama Simham* (1990)

Another milestone came in 1990 with "Abbani Teeyani Debba" from *Jagadeka Veerudu Athiloka Sundari*, a film that paired Chiranjeevi with Sridevi and featured music by

Ilaiyaraaja. The song, composed in just three hours, became a sensation thanks to its infectious rhythm and innovative choreography. Initially handled by veteran Sundaram Master, the choreography was later completed by his son Prabhu Deva due to health issues. Prabhu Deva's signature additions—graceful transitions, sharp waist movements, and seamless blends of classical Indian dance with breakdance and disco—gave the song a dynamic visual appeal. Chiranjeevi's adaptability and raw energy, paired with Sridevi's elegance, transformed this number into an enduring classic, highlighting the rising sophistication and hybrid nature of Telugu film choreography.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tw5BPAtPgDA>
Plate - 4.74: Dance sequence from *Jagadeka Veerudu Athiloka Sundari* (1990)

Continuing with the same film, "Yamaho" was another standout dance number, this time drawing from Ilaiyaraaja's Tamil composition "Madurai Marikozhundhu." Performed by Chiranjeevi and Sridevi, the song fused folk with modern contemporary dance elements. Though detailed choreography notes are scarce, the routine emphasized synchronized ensemble dancing, energetic expressions, and festive visuals that reflected the joyous mood of the narrative. The song further cemented the magical on-screen chemistry between the lead pair and showcased the vibrant dance culture Telugu cinema was embracing at the dawn of the 1990s.

Another compelling number from *Jagadeka Veerudu Athiloka Sundari* was "Dhinakkuthaa Kasakkuro", known for its brisk tempo and street-dance-inflected style. Despite limited documentation on the choreography, it is known for its rapid footwork and expressive flair. Most impressively, Chiranjeevi performed this electrifying routine while running a fever of 104°F, a testament to his unmatched professionalism and commitment to performance. His energy in the face of illness not only earned industry admiration but also contributed to the song's success and popularity.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbVt23wrHiM>

Plate - 4.75: Dance sequence of songs 'Yamaho' and 'Dhinakkuthaa Kasakkuro' from *Jagadeka Veerudu Athiloka Sundari* (1990)

"Vana Vana Velluvaye" – *Gang Leader* (1991) Arguably one of the most iconic rain songs in Telugu cinema, *Vana Vana Velluvaye* gained legendary status for its choreography, mood, and on-screen chemistry between Chiranjeevi and Vijayashanti. Set against a lush, rain-soaked backdrop, the visuals oozed romantic tension and aesthetic sensuality. The dance movements were a blend of grace and emotion, with Chiranjeevi executing each step with fluid control, often using slow, sweeping gestures to match the rhythm of the rain and music. His ability to balance expressive intimacy with technical finesse gave the song emotional resonance. It remains a classic example of how dance can enhance mood and narrative without resorting to grand spectacle.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pF-cNEi3oJw>
 Plate - 4.76: Dance sequence from movie *Gang Leader* (1991)

"Bangaru Kodipetta" – *Gharana Mogudu* (1992) This vibrant folk-inspired number became a cultural milestone in Telugu cinema. Composed by M.M. Keeravani, the tune was instantly catchy, and Chiranjeevi's performance matched its energy beat-for-beat. The choreography leaned heavily on rural celebratory dance styles, with exaggerated hand gestures, quick footwork, and powerful hip movements that energized both the screen and the audience. His charismatic expressions, sharp timing, and ability to command a large group of background dancers demonstrated his skill in handling mass choreography. "Bangaru Kodipetta" transcended the screen to become a part of popular culture, widely performed in public events, television shows, and later reimagined in *Magadheera*, underlining its timeless appeal.

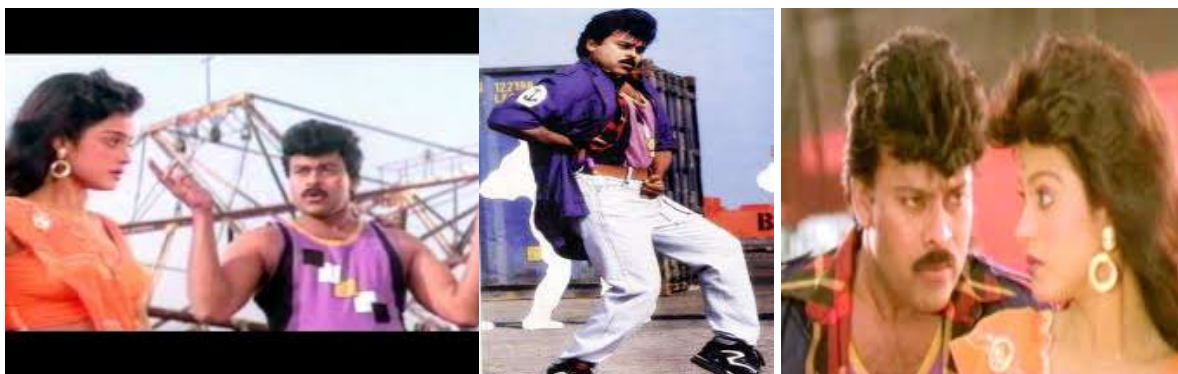


Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxvUiz6s4Gk>
 Plate - 4.77: Dance sequence of Bangaru Kodipetta song *Gharana Mogudu* (1992)

Muta Mestri (1993) delivers several standout tracks composed by Raj–Koti, most memorably the high-energy “Ee Petaku Nene Mestri”, which opens the film with bold, charismatic dance moves by Chiranjeevi, supported by folk-inspired mass choreography. The catchy and visually vibrant “Chik Chik Cham” stands out for its incorporation of break style choreography, a then-novel blend of street dance moves, sharp isolations, and robotic expressions, showcasing Chiranjeevi’s versatility and willingness to experiment with global dance trends.



Photo Courtesy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9_t1TiYkIw
Plate - 4.78: Dance sequences from *Muta Mestri* (1993)

Bombay Priyudu (1996), directed by K. Raghavendra Rao, features dance sequences that are visually rich, emotionally expressive, and integral to the film’s romantic narrative. Choreographed in the director’s signature style, the dances blend Indian filmi movements with semi-classical and folk elements, often set against vibrant backdrops and decorated with symbolic props like flowers and fruits. Actress Rambha’s graceful expressions and energetic performances enhance the visual appeal, while M. M. Keeravani’s melodious compositions provide a rhythmic base that allows the dance to communicate emotion and intimacy between the lead characters. In “*Guppedu Gunda*”, the choreography is lively and flirtatious, featuring colorful props and energetic group movements that reflect the playful teasing between the lead pair. Rambha’s expressive dance style and JD Chakravarthy’s spirited presence bring a vibrant, youthful charm to the song. In “*Chethilo Cheyyesi*”, the dance is more intimate and romantic, with graceful hand gestures and close duet movements that highlight emotional connection.

The visuals are soft and dreamlike, enhancing the mood of love and tenderness through elegant choreography and scenic beauty.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TNmQ1XM2fM>

Plate - 4.79: Dance sequences from *Bombay Priyudu* (1996)

Tholi Prema (1998), directed by A. Karunakaran and starring Pawan Kalyan and Keerthi Reddy, is a landmark romantic film in Telugu cinema, celebrated for its youthful narrative, fresh casting, and melodious music composed by Deva. The film features iconic songs like “Yemaindo Yemo,” a soulful track that captures emotional vulnerability; “Romance Romance,” a vibrant celebration of young love; and “Emi Sodhara,” a playful, energetic number that added charm to the film’s light-hearted moments. The choreography, handled by Raghu Master and others, marked a transition from high-drama dance routines to more natural, expression-based movements that aligned with the film’s emotional tone. Dance in *Tholi Prema* wasn’t about spectacle but about enhancing storytelling using subtle body language and realistic expressions to reflect the characters’ inner feelings. This approach not only matched Pawan Kalyan’s understated screen presence but also contributed to a new wave of romantic cinema where dance served the narrative rather than overshadowing it.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbklMuDh7i0>
 Plate - 4.80: Dance sequences from *Tholi Prema* (1998)

Thammudu (1999), directed by P. A. Arun Prasad and starring Pawan Kalyan and Preeti Jhangiani, became a sensational hit for its youthful energy, sports backdrop, and chart-topping music composed by Ramana Gogula. The film featured iconic songs like “Made in Andhra,” a high-energy anthem that blended Western beats with desi attitude, and “Travelling Soldier,” which reflected the protagonist’s rebellious spirit and transformation. Another popular track, “Pedavi Daatani,” stood out for its catchy tune and stylish visuals. The choreography, done by choreographers such as Raju Sundaram and others, showcased a dynamic mix of breakdance, freestyle, and street-style movements, especially in songs like “Made in Andhra,” which resonated strongly with college youth. Dance transitions in *Thammudu* shifted from lighthearted and playful to powerful and athletic as the film’s narrative evolved from carefree romance to determined self-growth, aligning perfectly with Pawan Kalyan’s rugged yet charismatic performance style and redefining youth-centric dance expression in late ’90s Telugu cinema.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr7TttotBD8>
 Plate - 4.81: Dance sequences from *Thammudu* (1999)

The first decade of the 21st century was instrumental in transforming Telugu film dance from classical-rooted routines to contemporary, mass-appeal choreography. Influenced by global trends and propelled by dynamic choreographers like Prabhu Deva, Raju Sundaram, Raghava Lawrence, this period witnessed the rise of high-energy, visually stylized, and rhythmically complex dance numbers.

The song “Aata Kaavala “ from movie Annayya showcased romantic duet choreography with a blend of classical grace and cinematic poise. The synchronized footwork between Chiranjeevi and Soundarya highlighted chemistry as a storytelling tool. It set a precedent for romantic dance numbers in Telugu cinema during the early 2000s. This romantic duet featured expressive partner-based choreography. The synchronized movements between Chiranjeevi and Simran demonstrated seamless narrative integration. Widely appreciated for its grace and chemistry, the song became a template for duet choreography in Telugu cinema.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQDS0yhT14k>
 Plate - 4.82 : Dance sequence of “Aata Kaavala” from *Annaya* (2000)

In 2001, the romantic duet “Minimalist Romance – Subtle Gestures in ‘Baabu Battayi Pandu’ from *Prematho Raa*” emphasized intimacy through restrained movement. Choreographed by Rakesh Master, the dance highlighted romantic tension using body language and silence over spectacle.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3v07sfK1Ro>
Plate-4.83 : Dance sequence from *Prematho Raa* movie (2001)

Also in 2002, Signature Moves – The ‘Veena Step’ in ‘Dayi Dayi Damma’ from *Indra* became iconic in Telugu cinema. Chiranjeevi’s expressive body language and precision choreography turned the song into a cultural marker. In 2003, Militant Precision Choreographed Protest in ‘Kodithe Kottali’ from *Tagore* used synchronized movements and militaristic formations to underline the film’s social message.



Photo courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEINMiNZnIk>
Plate - 4.84 : Dance sequence of hook step from *Indra* (2002)

Another 2003 track, “Street-Style Improvisation – Urban Beats in ‘Calcutta Pan Vesina’ from *Raghavendra*” captured youth culture with raw, street-inspired freestyle dance.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EA-XJN8u1vM>
Plate - 4.85: Dance sequence from *Raghavendra* (2003)

Varsham (2004), directed by Sobhan and starring Prabhas and Trisha, became a musical blockbuster largely due to its emotionally rich and visually captivating songs composed by Devi Sri Prasad. The film featured iconic tracks like “Mellagaa Karagani,” a soulful romantic duet choreographed by Raghava Lawrence, known for its poetic feel and graceful visuals that beautifully portrayed the chemistry between the leads. “Nuvvostanante Nenoddantana,” choreographed by Raju Sundaram, stood out as a timeless love song, especially memorable for its rain-soaked picturization and minimalistic yet expressive dance.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8wRhgAliMc>
Plate - 4.86: Dance sequence from *Varsham* (2004)

In the movie *Billa* (2009), the song “My Name Is Billa” is a stylish and powerful title track. It shows the hero as smart, confident, and strong. The dance style in the song is modern

and smooth, with moves from hip-hop, contemporary dance, and even some martial arts. It is used to introduce the hero or show his strength in an exciting moment. The cool dance steps were done by choreographers Dinesh Master or Prem Rakshith. The film was directed by Meher Ramesh.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWrgUeK6aLw>
Plate - 4.87: Dance sequence from *Billa* (2009)

Between 2010 and 2020, dance in Telugu cinema underwent a profound transformation, reflecting broader changes in cultural identity, globalization, and audience engagement. The early 2010s were marked by a resurgence of traditional Indian dance elements infused into mainstream film choreography, often drawing from classical forms like Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam while experimenting with cinematic presentation. As the decade progressed, choreographers began to incorporate global styles such as hip-hop, breakdance, salsa, and contemporary freestyle, resulting in a dynamic hybridization of movement vocabulary. This decade witnessed a striking evolution in Telugu cinema's dance choreography, marking a shift from region-specific folk styles to globally influenced, digitally shareable performances. This transformation was fuelled by enhanced exposure to international media, the rise of social platforms, and the growing fan base for actors known for their dynamic dancing. Songs during this period began incorporating a wide range of global dance vocabularies from hip-hop, krumping, and contemporary to EDM-inspired group formations blended with native folk and classical idioms.

The early 2010s marked a transition in Telugu cinema where dance sequences became more urban and kinetic. "*Ringa Ringa*" from *Arya 2* set this tone with its peppy beats and explosive footwork performed by Allu Arjun. The choreography fused traditional beats with hip-hop elements like tutting and chest pops, creating a youthful and aggressive visual impact. The camera movements enhanced the choreography through tight frames and dynamic tracking shots, making it one of the first Telugu songs to trend beyond regional audiences.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.behindwoods.com/tamil-movies/slideshow/south-indian-songs-that-ruled-bollywood/ringa-ring-aarya-2.html>

Plate - 4.88 : Allu Arjun performing street-style dance in "Ringa Ringa" in *Arya 2*

In stark contrast to the vibrancy of "*Ringa Ringa*", "*My Love is Gone*" presented a softer, more fluid choreography, characterized by controlled isolations and body rolls. The emotional weight of the lyrics was matched by a dance language rooted in contemporary expression, rarely seen in Telugu mainstream cinema until then. The choreography allowed for personal emotional resonance through stylized gestures and non-linear floor patterns.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdN9qdDnE5U>

Plate - 4.89: Allu Arjun in "My Love is Gone" song

"Kevvu Keka" from Gabbar Singh (2012) brought back the item number format with a fresh intensity. The choreography was based on rhythmic folk footwork and was designed to highlight the star charisma of Pawan Kalyan and the glamour of the female lead. The dance emphasized mass appeal through bold expressions, synchronized group dances, and rapid percussion beats, resulting in wide virality.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=wjtkVWi7El4>

Plate - 4.90 : Dance sequence of "Kevvu Keka" song

A visual and choreographic highlight of the decade, *"Top Lechipoddi"* from *iddarammayilatho* (2013) incorporated Western dance forms such as locking and popping while maintaining a high-energy South Indian rhythm. The background dancers executed street formations and circular transitions, giving the choreography a global vibe. Choreographer

Ganesh Master's work here was praised for bringing a nightclub aesthetic to Telugu cinema.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzJxLhCHNLM>
Plate - 4.91 : Street-style choreography in "Top Lechipoddi" song

Blending humour with regional folk, "*Cinema Choopistha Mava*" from *Race Gurram* (2014) exemplified Allu Arjun's knack for expressive and entertaining dance. The steps involved stomping rhythms, exaggerated shoulder movements, and facial expressions, turning the dance into a visual comedy act. It reflected a shift toward character-based choreography that supported the film's tone.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHbVybLsGz4>
Plate - 4.92 : Folk-comedic choreography in "Cinema Choopistha Mava" song

A powerful representation of mass choreography, "*You Are My MLA*" from *Sarrainodu* (2016) featured broad, dramatic movements with a strong rhythmic base. The dance highlighted strength and swagger, using broad stances, chest-thumping gestures, and shoulder rolls to portray dominance. It became an instant crowd favourite and remains a template for high-energy "mass hero" songs. "*Blockbuster*" song from *Sarrainodu* (2016) iconic was its combination of visual simplicity and dance virality. Its choreography was highly structured,

with a clear hook step repeated multiple times, allowing audiences to emulate it easily. The dance was less about complexity and more about branding—choreography designed for digital culture and repeat viewing.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6h-kQLQqec>
Plate - 4.93: Dance sequences - "You Are My MLA" & "Blockbuster" song

Marking Chiranjeevi's return, the song "Ammadu Lets Do kummudu" from Khaidi no. 150 (2017) bridged generational dance styles. The choreography was semi-classical with commercial embellishments—kicks, hip thrusts, and coordinated backing dancers. It paid homage to Chiranjeevi's earlier dance legacy while embracing contemporary staging.



Photo Courtesy: <http://www.rspnetwork.in/2016/12/chiranjeevis-khaidi-no-150-movie-ammadu.html>
Plate - 4.94 : Dance Performance in "Ammadu Let's Do Kummudu" song

"*Vachinde*" song from *Fidaa* (2017) redefined female-led dance numbers. Sai Pallavi's uninhibited folk-style dancing reflected spontaneity, cultural rootedness, and feminine energy. Unlike choreographed perfection, her moves were grounded in realism, which resonated deeply with audiences. It showed how dance could be narrative-driven and emotionally authentic without being technically over-stylized.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjQhZaSdCpg&pp=0gcJCdgAo7VqN5tD>
Plate - 4.95 : Sai Pallavi's organic folk steps in "*Vachinde*" song

In the 2020s, Telugu cinema entered a technologically transformative phase that profoundly impacted its approach to dance choreography and visual storytelling. This period saw the increasing integration of digital technologies such as computer-generated imagery (CGI), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) into dance sequences, expanding the cinematic canvas beyond traditional stagecraft. Directors like S.S. Rajamouli spearheaded this shift, using high-end visual effects not just for spectacle but to elevate choreography to a narrative device. One of the most prominent examples is the song "*Naatu Naatu*" from *RRR* (2022), which combined high-energy dance, period-accurate costuming, and seamless background CGI to craft a globally resonant performance. Choreographed by Prem Rakshit, this performance earned an Academy Award and brought global attention to Telugu film dance as a cultural force. The global spotlight reached its peak when *RRR*'s "*Naatu Naatu*" (2022) became the first Indian song to win an Oscar for Best Original Song, underscoring the international appeal of Telugu cinematic dance.



Photo Courtesy: <https://scroll.in/reel/1041879/the-story-behind-the-award-winning-song-naatu-naatu-from-rrr>
 Plate-4.96 : Dance sequence from “Naatu Naatu”

Another notable instance is the song "Dosti" from the same film, which used evocative movement and symbolic staging to represent friendship and rebellion. While the choreography remained grounded in physical performance, it was digitally enhanced to blend with sweeping cinematic visuals. Moreover, early experimentation with artificial intelligence (AI) in choreography planning has emerged supporting previsualization, rhythm-matching, and assisting choreographers in designing complex movements. This convergence of technology and creativity reflects a forward-thinking approach in Telugu cinema.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.bollywoodhungama.com/videos/movie-songs/rrr-dosti-full-video-amit-trivedi-m-m-keeravani-jr-ntr-ram-charan-ajay-devgn-alia-bhatt-s-s-rajamouli/>
 Plate - 4.97: “Dosti” (RRR, 2022)

Simultaneously, dance reality shows like *Dhee*, *Dance Plus Telugu*, and *Aata Juniors* began serving as talent incubators, launching dancers and choreographers into the film industry, thus diversifying dance vocabularies and styles on-screen. Young talents nurtured

through these platforms brought a renewed energy to songs such as "Arabic Kuthu" (*Beast*, though Tamil, popular among Telugu audiences) and "Kurchi Madathapetti" (*gunturu karam*, 2024), showcasing precise coordination, hip-hop infusions, and social-media-friendly hooks.



Photo Courtesy: <https://telugucinema.com/news/internet-divided-over-kurchi-madathapetti>

Plate - 4.98 : Image from kurchimadathapetti from Guntur Kaaram

More recent trends (2023–2025) reflect a continued emphasis on fusion and experimentation, with high-octane performances by emerging artists like Sreeleela in tracks such as "Kissik" (*Pushpa 2*, 2025) and stylized folk-electronic fusions like "Chuttamalle" (*Devara*, 2024). These developments suggest that dance in Telugu cinema has evolved from being a supplementary form of entertainment to a central visual narrative device, contributing to storytelling, character development, and cultural identity within the cinematic experience.



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.indiatoday.in/movies/regional-cinema/story/watch-promo-allu-arjun-sreeleela-set-to-sizzle-in-kissik-song-from-pushpa-2-the-rule-2638779-2024-11-23>

Plate - 4.99 : Kissik song Image from Pushpa-2 (2024)



Photo Courtesy: <https://www.thedailyjagran.com/entertainment/devara-song-chuttamalle-out-jr-ntr-and-janhvi-kapoors-love-ballad-leaves-fans-smitten-watch-10178507>

Plate - 4.100 : Chuttamalle dance still from *Devara* movie (2024)

In interviews, Rajamouli and Prem Rakshit emphasized the meticulous preparation and collaborative nature of these dance sequences, often involving extensive pre-visualizations, motion capture, and digital set extensions. Ultimately, dance in Telugu cinema during the 2020s has moved beyond the realm of pure physical expression emerging as a digitally enhanced, narratively strategic medium that bridges tradition with cutting-edge innovation.

From the 1960s to the present, special performances and special songs in Telugu cinema have evolved significantly through the performances of iconic dancers who brought unique

styles and personas to the screen. Jyothi Lakshmi introduced bold cabaret-inspired moves with theatrical flair, while Jayamalini in the 70s and 80s became known for her energetic and sensual dances, often in tavern or royal court settings. Anuradha added rustic charm and folk elements to her special songs, blending sensuality with grace. Jayalalithaa, though not a typical vamp, brought elegance and classical finesse to dance numbers in her early film career. Silk Smitha redefined the item number with her unapologetic sensuality and powerful screen presence in the 80s, followed by Disco Shanti in the 90s, who popularized disco-style, flashy performances with funky costumes and exaggerated expressions. The 2000s saw Mumaith Khan bring hip-hop and urban energy into Telugu item songs, while dancers like Muntaj, Ramya Sri, Abhinayasri, and Hamsa Nandini continued the trend with variations ranging from seductive to celebratory performances. In recent times, lead heroines like Parvathi Melton, Shruti Haasan, Samantha, Tamannaah, and Sreeleela have taken on glamorous special songs, merging western choreography with Indian sensibilities, showcasing polished technique, attitude, and cinematic style. This journey reflects a transformation from vamp roles to celebrated dance performances, with each artist contributing to the dynamic evolution of item numbers in Telugu cinema.



Plate - 4.101 : Special Song Performances by Female actors

Comparative Analysis of Dance Across Decades

Over the past several decades, the dance culture in Telugu cinema has undergone a profound metamorphosis, reflecting shifts in aesthetics, technology, performance sensibilities, and socio-cultural aspirations. In the earlier decades, particularly the 1950s–1980s, dance was often rooted in classical traditions—primarily Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam with heroines like Vyjayanthimala and Savitri showcasing abhinaya and natya as narrative devices rather than standalone spectacle. By the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a visible transition toward semi-classical and commercial choreography that catered more directly to audience entertainment, with stars like Chiranjeevi and Prabhu Deva introducing breakdance, disco, and jazz elements.

Equally transformative has been the role of technology and cinematography in reshaping dance presentation. Earlier songs were shot in wide frames with minimal edits to preserve classical detailing. Today, dance sequences utilize rapid cuts, drone shots, CGI overlays, and AR-enhanced visuals, as seen in films like *RRR* and *Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo*. These enhancements have not only elevated production value but also influenced how choreography is constructed—less for continuous performance and more for screen fragmentation and digital virality.

In terms of narrative function, dance in the earlier decades was often confined to romantic interludes or religious themes. In contrast, post-2010 choreography has increasingly taken on a diegetic function, often forwarding character arcs, social commentary, or cinematic tension. Songs like “*Vachinde*” (*Fidaa*, 2017) are narrative extensions rather than ornamental detours. Similarly, “*Naatu Naatu*” (*RRR*, 2022) transforms dance into a symbolic act of defiance and brotherhood.

The idea of star power and the dancer's image has also seen a tectonic shift. Earlier, few actors were celebrated primarily for their dancing. Today, actors like Allu Arjun, Jr. NTR, and

Sai Pallavi have cultivated strong dance personas that often eclipse their acting identities in the public eye. Dance has become central to brand-building, influencing marketing, merchandising, and fan engagement.

Finally, audience engagement with dance has evolved dramatically in the age of social media. Earlier, song sequences were consumed passively in theatres. Now, audiences actively participate through TikTok challenges, Instagram reels, and YouTube reaction videos. Hook steps are designed for replication, with choreography often aimed at virality more than cinematic coherence. Dance is no longer a one-way performance; it is a participatory culture.

In sum, the dance tradition in Telugu cinema has moved from being a narrative accessory to a multidimensional cultural force shaped by technology, star power, global aesthetics, and digital audiences. The comparative lens across decades reveals not only the technical and stylistic evolution but also how dance has mirrored broader transformations in Telugu popular culture.

Table 4.6: Comparative Analysis of Dance Across Decades in Telugu Cinema

Aspect	Pre-2000s	2000s	2010–till date
Dance Styles	Classical (Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam), Folk	Semi-classical, Disco, Breakdance	Hip-hop, Urban, Fusion, Contemporary, Krumping
Complexity of Choreography	Low to moderate (emphasis on expression)	Moderate (choreographed routines, rhythm-driven)	High (technical, fitness-driven, multi-style, layered routines)
Technology & Cinematography	Static long takes, few edits	Improved angles, song montages	CGI, drone shots, fast cuts, digital enhancement
Narrative Role of Dance	Decorative, devotional, romantic	Entertainment, interval fillers	Integral to character arcs, symbolism, plot movement
Star Power and Image	Limited to select actors (e.g., Chiranjeevi)	Emerging dance icons (Prabhu Deva, Jr. NTR)	Dance-centric stardom (Allu Arjun, Sai Pallavi, Ram Charan)

Aspect	Pre-2000s	2000s	2010–till date
Choreographers' Influence	Minimal public visibility	Rising prominence (e.g., Raju Sundaram)	Celebrity status (e.g., Sekhar Master, Prem Rakshit)
Audience Engagement	Passive (cinema viewing)	Early TV and fan club responses	Participatory (social media trends, viral hook steps)
Cultural Influence	Rooted in tradition, mythological & devotional	Masala and mass-audience appeal	Hybrid aesthetics, pan-Indian and global outreach
Dance Setting	Temple sets, stage aesthetics	Artificial sets, fantasy locations	Realistic backdrops, festivals, foreign locations
Distribution Medium	Theatre, TV reruns	CDs, TV, early YouTube	YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, OTT platforms

The journey of dance in Telugu cinema reflects the broader evolution of the industry itself—from narrative-based performances rooted in classical and folk traditions to visually dynamic, technically rich, and globally influenced choreographic styles. In the early decades, dance served primarily as a storytelling tool, with actors like ANR and NTR using abhinaya and classical techniques to convey emotions and mythology. Over time, as film music embraced new rhythms and cinematic presentation evolved, so did dance—gaining energy, precision, and mass appeal. The emergence of stars like Chiranjeevi marked a turning point, bringing a revolution in commercial dance with Western influences, breakdance, and high-voltage choreography. Later generations, including Jr. NTR, Ram Charan, and Allu Arjun, fused classical roots with contemporary dance forms, pushing boundaries through stylized movement, rapid editing, and thematic integration. Dance in modern Telugu cinema is no longer a separate spectacle; it is a narrative force, a star-making element, and a visual experience that continues to adapt with technology, audience tastes, and cultural trends. This transition from tradition to innovation highlights the enduring significance of dance as both an artistic expression and a commercial hallmark in Telugu film history.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Dance in Telugu Cinema, the transitions & alterations has undertaken an extensive and in-depth exploration of the evolving function of dance in Telugu films, tracing its journey from traditional classical roots to its present-day manifestations fashioned through commercialism, technology, and international impacts. This concluding chapter brings collectively the key insights discussed inside the preceding four chapters, reaffirming the studies framework and synthesizing the thematic findings that emerged throughout decades of cinema history. via weaving together views on aesthetics, performance, local tradition, and cinematic evolution, this provides a holistic know-how of dance as both a performative and socio-cultural artifact within Telugu cinema.

From its early years, Telugu cinema incorporated dance as an essential cultural expression, rooted deeply in the classical traditions of Andhra Pradesh. Inside the formative a long time from the Thirties to Sixties, classical bureaucracy along with Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam, and Andhra Natyam were imperative to storytelling in mythological and devotional movies. Dance, in this context, was now not merely a visible deal with however a story tool imbued with non-secular and emotional depth. movies like Bhakta Prahlada (1932), Seeta Kalyanam (1934), and Lava Kusa (1963) exemplified the use of dance to illustrate devotion, divine narratives, and cultural values. Those dance sequences conformed to the cultured codes of the Natya Shastra, emphasizing abhinaya (expression), Natya (drama), and nritya (rhythm and movement). The technical finesse, symbolic gestures, and stylized expressions in those dances connected audiences to their non secular and cultural history.

Chapter 2 emphasised the importance of pioneers like Vempati Pedda Satyam and Vempati Chinna Satyam in shaping the cinematic model of conventional dance forms. Their dance styles ensured that cinematic choreography remained rooted in true classical vocabularies whilst also

being reimagined for the film medium. The efforts of these choreographers played an essential position in maintaining and promoting Telugu classical traditions on a famous platform. movies which include *Jayabheri* (1959), *Nartanasala* (1963), and *Shakuntala* (1966) function as crucial milestones on this integration, wherein dance no longer only superior the narrative but also conveyed complicated emotional and psychological states of the characters.

Similarly to classical, nearby folks traditions which include Lambadi, Burrakatha, and Veedhi Natakam commenced to influence cinematic storytelling, particularly in movies with rural or socially applicable topics. The incorporation of people dance into cinema allowed filmmakers to authentically depict regional realities, community celebrations, and grassroots actions. This era also marked the beginning of the transformation of dance from sacred and staged forms to dynamic and numerous expressions tailor-made to evolving cinematic languages.

Through the 1970s and Nineteen Eighties, Telugu cinema underwent a good sized transformation as dance started out to conform into a hybrid language that combined classical foundations with folk and current patterns. This period saw the emergence of business cinema that prioritized amusement cost and visual spectacle. movies like *Sankarabharanam* (1979) and *Swarna Kamalam* (1988), both directed by way of k. Viswanath, endured to foreground classical dance as a medium of private transformation, cultural revival, and spiritual inquiry. Those movies supplied cinematic space for Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, permitting them to be skilled as dwelling traditions inside present day narratives. At the same time, actors like Krishna and Chiranjeevi added a new physicality and fashion to dance, rooted in folk and modern-day rhythms.

Chiranjeevi's access into the Telugu movie enterprise marked a watershed second inside the visible and performative vocabulary of cinematic dance. His high-power moves, breakdance-inspired steps, and on-screen aura converted the manner dance became perceived in mass cinema. He synthesized conventional folk, disco, and cinematic aptitude, producing

choreography that became both relatable and aspirational. Songs like “Abbanee Teeyani Debba” and “Golimaar” became iconic for his or her catchy rhythms and mass appeal. Parallely, Kamal Haasan, mainly in movies like *Sagara Sangamam* (1983), delivered a different sensibility to dance. His history in Bharatanatyam and his commitment to approach appearing brought about the portrayal of dance as each an internal area and a performative art, blending emotion, method, and narrative depth. His performance in *Sagara Sangamam* became a landmark in South Indian cinema, portraying the psychological and non-secular adventure of a classical dancer. The movie celebrated the struggles of a purist artist in a changing world, and Kamal Haasan’s portrayal introduced countrywide interest to the seriousness of classical dance in an industrial cinematic space. His determination to authenticity—present process, rigorous dance training, emoting through nuanced abhinaya, and executing complex adavus—improved the expectations from actors concerning dance. Haasan’s contribution additionally motivated filmmakers to explore dance now not simply as amusement however as artistic and cultural discourse.

The Nineties witnessed a similar expansion of dance vocabularies in Telugu cinema with the advent of choreographers like Prabhu Deva. frequently referred to as “India’s Michael Jackson,” Prabhu Deva added worldwide dance factors which include hip-hop, popping, locking, and street styles into mainstream choreography. His fashion changed into marked through precision, speed, and innovation, redefining how adolescents' way of life and urban rhythms have been represented on display. His effect extended beyond dance sequences into the entire visible presentation of songs, integrating dress, lighting, and cinematography into the choreography. administrators and choreographers like Raghava Lawrence, prabhu deva additionally contributed to this visible spectacle, blending cutting-edge aesthetics with narrative storytelling.

The 2000s marked a new generation of choreographic sophistication, technological experimentation, and audience segmentation. With the rise of multiplex culture and pan-Indian audiences, filmmakers started out making an investment extra in manufacturing values, and dance sequences became centrepieces of cinematic marketing. Stars like Jr. NTR, Mahesh Babu, and Pawan Kalyan adapted their movement patterns to align with their screen personas. Jr. NTR, educated in classical dance from a young age, brought a grounded, effective presence to choreography, frequently incorporating Kuchipudi factors into his performances. Mahesh Babu projected an understated beauty, while Pawan Kalyan's dance fashion desired spontaneity and appeal over technical complexity. Every of these stars developed signature actions that were repeated, referenced, and celebrated in popular subculture, growing a remarks loop among dance, stardom, and fandom.

From the 2010s, Allu Arjun emerged as the most seen face of stylized dance in Telugu cinema. His first-rate agility, fluid body language, and dedication to bounce rehearsals made him stand out. Choreographers like Sekhar master, Jani master, and Ganesh master designed progressive steps for songs like "Butta Bomma," and "Srivalli," which went viral on social media. Allu Arjun's reputation throughout linguistic and regional limitations highlighted the growing pan-Indian reach of Telugu cinema and its dance aesthetics. His performances struck a stability among modernity and regional flavour, blending international dance vocabularies with Telugu cinematic rhythm.

Through the 2020s, digital virality has become a decisive component in how dance sequences were conceptualized, choreographed, and fed on. Social media systems consisting of YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok transformed dance right into a participatory revel in. Hook steps have been designed to be short, catchy, and easily replicable, ensuing in mass-level dance demanding situations, reels, and influencer performances. This era additionally marked the growing presence of Western and urban dance, current, Latin, and fusion—in Telugu movie

songs, frequently choreographed for digital-first visibility. The bounds among screen, and social media started to blur, giving upward push to a new choreography of interactivity and immediate gratification.

Amid those transitions, the contributions of character artists can't be left out. Kamal Haasan, along with his creative integrity and classical education, bridged the space between conventional rigor and cinematic expressiveness. Chiranjeevi redefined the opportunities of mass dance with his precise strength and versatility. Prabhu Deva globalized Telugu choreography, increasing its variety and appeal. Jr. NTR reintroduced classical authenticity within commercial codecs, and Allu Arjun has become a pan-Indian image of technical perfection and stylistic innovation. Choreographers like Sundaram master, Rakesh, Sekhar, Prem Rakshit, and Brinda played key roles in shaping visible way of life, often operating behind the curtain to create iconic movements that transcended the display screen.

Notwithstanding the modifications and modernizations, the look at Telugu cinematic dance keeps a deep cultural continuity. Classical forms have now not disappeared; as an alternative, they were reinvented. Whether or not it's using mudras in a business object track or a classical motif in a dream sequence, conventional dance aesthetics keep to locate an area in current choreography. Movies like *Rudraveena*, *Sankarabharanam*, *Swarna Kamalam*, and *Shyam Singha Roy* illustrate how classical traditions are periodically re-embraced to claim cultural identity and spiritual values.

Technology has been a transformative force in shaping how dance is accomplished, captured, and disseminated. The use of excessive-definition cameras, drones, movement rigs, CGI, and advanced modifying software has allowed for brand spanking new angles, views, and visual manipulation. directors and choreographers now collaborate closely with cinematographers to ensure that every dance move is optimized for visual impact. lighting fixtures, color grading, and VFX are crucial to the present day choreography process.

Moreover, the increased use of digital units and monitors opens new innovative spaces for providing dance in fantastical or hyper-stylized environments.

Dance today is also an essential part of megastar-making and film advertising. A nicely-executed dance can make or break a movie's marketability. Signature movements grow to be memes, GIFs, and Instagram tendencies. Dance defines a star's display screen identity—whether or not it's Ram Charan's rustic power in Rangasthalam, Jr. NTR's commanding presence in temper and RRR, or Samantha Ruth Prabhu's fierce beauty in “Oo Antava.” those performances no longer handiest captivate audiences however additionally gas digital engagement and cultural remark.

Thesis Hypothesis Alignment Chart

Hypothesis	Key Thesis Claim	Expanded Supporting Evidence
Globalization & Technology	Global influences and tech tools transformed dance into a global spectacle.	• Prabhu Deva brought international dance styles like hip-hop and popping into Telugu cinema, marking the influence of global trends. • The 2020s saw heavy use of technology like CGI, drones, motion rigs, and virtual sets to enhance the visual spectacle of dance. • Hook steps are now crafted with social media virality in mind, especially for platforms like Instagram and YouTube. • Dance scenes are edited with fast cuts and dynamic camera angles,

		showcasing technological sophistication.
Commercialization & Audience	Dance is now driven by commercial success and viewer demand.	• Dance numbers are frequently released as promotional content earlier than a film's launch, serving as most important advertising gear. • Choreography is adapted to celebrity personas: Jr. NTR's classical energy, Allu Arjun's style, and Pawan Kalyan's informal ease. • target audience expectancies desire high-strength, visually stimulating performances, every so often overshadowing narrative context. • Viral dance tendencies are prioritized, leading to the introduction of catchy, effortlessly replicable steps for lovers and influencers.
Key Personalities	Choreographers and actors shaped Telugu cinematic dance evolution.	• Vempati Chinna Satyam and Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy preserved classical traditions whilst adapting them for cinema. • Chiranjeevi's dynamic dance fashion within the Eighties combined people,

		breakdance, and mass attraction, defining a new era. • Kamal Haasan delivered classical rigor and expressive intensity to screen dance, influencing both target audience and enterprise. • Prabhu Deva and Allu Arjun each hooked up awesome dance identities that set benchmarks in Telugu cinema. • backstage, choreographers like Sundaram master, Sekhar master, Brinda, and Prem Rakshit created a number of the most iconic dance numbers in contemporary Telugu films.
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The study reaffirms that dance in Telugu cinema is a palimpsest—a layered textual content in which traces of older paperwork stay even as new ones are inscribed. From temple rituals and folks gala's to theatrical stages, studio units, and cell phone screens, Telugu cinematic dance has traversed multiple worlds. It maintains to conform, adapt, and reply to the cultural pulse of its times at the same time as maintaining an critical rootedness in its regional and aesthetic identity. it's far a residing shape, embodying the complexities of lifestyle, change, innovation, and continuity.

There is full-size scope for further studies. studies on gender representation in dance, nearby choreographic versions throughout Telangana and Andhra, and comparative analyses

with different Indian local cinemas ought to provide precious insights. Moreover, the role of digital virality, target market reception in diaspora communities, and the impact of dance schooling and reality television suggests on movie choreography benefit deeper academic inquiry. There is additional area for ethnographic research on backstage practices, choreographer–actor collaborations, and schooling methods within the Telugu film industry. In the end, this thesis presents a comprehensive view of dance in Telugu cinema as an evolving art shape, an industrial method, and a cultural statement. It affirms that dance is not simply a performance on display but a mirrored image of the society, values, aspirations, and artistic spirit of the Telugu humans. As cinema keeps to embody new technologies, international influences, and target market behaviours, the dance inside it'll keep transforming—however it'll additionally continue to express, enchant, and bear.

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Globalization of Dance: Fusion of International Styles in the Telugu Film Industry

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Abstract

The Telugu film industry has undergone a remarkable evolution in embracing global dance styles, marking a profound shift influenced by globalization. As a researcher delving into the globalization of dance and the fusion of international styles within the Telugu film industry, this abstract outlines the intended research approach. Employing a mixed-method research strategy, this study aims to comprehensively explore the multifaceted dimensions of global dance influences in Telugu cinema. The qualitative aspect involves in-depth interviews and content analysis of select films, scrutinizing the choreographic evolution and cultural integration of diverse dance forms. Concurrently, quantitative analysis through surveys and audience reception studies will gauge the impact of these global dance fusions on viewership preferences and cinematic success metrics. Historical research and comparative analysis will also contextualize these transformations within broader sociocultural frameworks, elucidating the industry's responsiveness to global trends. By triangulating these methods, this research provides a nuanced understanding of how the fusion of international dance styles shapes artistic expression, cultural representation, and audience reception within the Telugu film landscape.

Keywords : Telugu film industry, Globalization, Telugu Cinema, Telugu film landscape.

Globalisation of Culture

It is now inevitable for us to live in a globalized world. While commonly seen as an economic and political phenomenon, it has had a significant cultural influence on most individuals. The topic of cultural globalization¹ is frequently pushed to the side of debates about its benefits and drawbacks. The phenomenon of globalization is intricate, thus posing challenges for scholars attempting to provide a precise definition. The phenomenon of globalization is intricate, thus posing challenges for scholars trying to give an accurate definition. Globalization primarily focuses on international economic and political interactions, tightly intertwined with geopolitics.

Globalization² encompasses the wide-ranging development of worldwide connections, the structuring of social activities on a global level, the advancement of global awareness, and, consequently, the strengthening of global society. An ecumenical definition encompasses most of what the term typically represents; however, its meaning still needs to be determined. It includes multiple significant processes, and the definitions vary depending on the specific aspects they highlight.

According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, culture is defined as the comprehensive collection of human activity and its creations, expressed via language, actions, and objects, and relying on humanity's ability to acquire and pass on knowledge to future generations. Furthermore, culture is not unchanging; it emerges from a deliberately fostered respect for specific traditions and behaviors. The legacies of conquerors and marketers encompass language, political and legal systems, religion, and social traditions. These legacies reflect the judgment rendered by the marketplace of ideas throughout popular history.

¹ Cultural globalization refers to the transmission of ideas, meanings and values around the world in such a way as to extend and intensify social relations.

² Globalization is a term used to describe how trade and technology have made the world into a more connected and interdependent place. Globalization also captures in its scope the economic and social changes that have come about as a result.

“They can also be accurately perceived as living artifacts, fragments, and components that have been passed down over time through the influence of indoctrination, widespread acceptance, and unquestioning adherence to traditional practices.” Culture serves as a tool employed by many entities in society, such as academics, families, politicians, and theologians, to establish and maintain order. The specific elements of this order may evolve throughout time in response to changing needs.

Culture emerges from a deliberately fostered respect for specific traditions and behaviors. The legacies of victors and marketeers, such as language, political and legal systems, religion, and social norms, are manifestations of the marketplace of ideas throughout popular history. The key factors driving the current rapid process of globalization are advancements in international transportation techniques and systems, revolutionary and new information technologies and services, and the dominant role of worldwide commerce in services and ideas. Their influences profoundly affect language, lifestyles, religion, and virtually every other aspect of civilization. One such evolution that has been adversely transformed and boomed was in Telugu cinema.

Telugu Cinema

The Telugu cinema³ industry is a dynamic example of the flexibility and dynamism inherent in artistic expression, especially in its adoption of several international dance genres. This regional film industry⁴ has changed throughout the years, transcending national borders and undergoing a significant metamorphosis influenced by globalization. This development is primarily driven by the complex blending of foreign dance forms in Telugu movies, which deviates significantly from conventional choreography conventions. The business, formerly profoundly rooted in the rich legacy of indigenous dance traditions, has broadened its repertory to include a diverse range of international movements, bridging cultural divides and enhancing the visual narrative of storytelling. This introduction aims to illuminate the many facets of this phenomenon, revealing the complex relationships between globalization, cross-cultural interaction, and creative innovation in Telugu cinema's dance industry.

Telugu cinema's incorporation of foreign dance forms symbolizes a more considerable paradigm change, highlighting the industry's flexibility in response to outside influences. With its origins in traditional Indian dance styles like Bharatanatyam⁵ and Kuchipudi⁶, the film industry experienced a slow transformation. Cultural divides became hazier as the world grew more connected due to communication and technological developments. This blurring of borders gave filmmakers and choreographers a blank canvas to play around, adapt, and reimagine how dance sequences are portrayed. Beyond regional boundaries, the cinematic canvas embraced a mosaic of global influences, fusing urban sounds from hip-hop with the fiery passion of flamenco, all of which were expertly woven into the narrative fabric of Telugu films.

Moreover, the development of dance in Telugu cinema signifies a convergence of civilizations and a celebration of diversity rather than just a stylistic inclination. The combination of many dance forms in these movies pays tribute to the connectivity of global artistic expressions rather than just copying motions. Filmmakers and choreographers⁷ have skillfully struck a balance between incorporating local sensibilities and maintaining the spirit of these international dance styles, resulting in a singular and alluring fusion. The visual appeal of the films is enhanced by this combination, which also acts as a mirror reflecting the changing cultural ethos and the industry's adaptability to a globalized audience.

³ Telugu cinema, also known as Tollywood, is the segment of Indian cinema dedicated to the production of motion pictures in the Telugu language, widely spoken in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

⁴ The regional film industry refers to the development and production of movies in specific cities or regions. It is a creative sector that has the potential to contribute to regional economic development

⁵ Bharatanatyam is an Indian classical dance form that originated in Tamil Nadu

⁶ Kuchipudi is one of the eight major Indian classical dances. It originates from a village named Kuchipudi in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Kuchipudi is a dance-drama performance, with its roots in the ancient Hindu Sanskrit text of Natya Shastra.

⁷ a person who composes the sequence of steps and moves for a performance of dance.

Furthermore, examining worldwide dance influences in Telugu cinema extends beyond a superficial adoption of moves; it digs into the profound sociological meanings beneath. Every dance style has a storyline, a chronicle, and a collection of cultural implications. The integration of these varied forms within the cinematic fabric of Telugu films unintentionally serves as a platform for artistic portrayal and interchange. The portrayal demonstrates a sophisticated comprehension of many customs, challenging preconceived notions, promoting inclusiveness, and highlighting the universal nature of human emotions through dance. This introspective perspective seeks to explore how these dance routines go beyond mere entertainment and instead serve as channels for fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation in the worldwide world of cinema.

History of Telugu Cinema

Bhishma Pratigna, a silent film directed by Raghupati Venkaiah Naidu and R.S. Prakash, marks the beginning of Telugu cinema history in 1921. This father-son team has helmed numerous films in the Telugu film industry, serving as both producers and directors. The inaugural screening of the film Bhakta Prahlada, which marked the advent of sound in cinema, took place in 1931. H.M. Reddy produced the film. The film Bhakta Prahlada was finalized on 15 September 1931, establishing this date as "Telugu Film Day" to honor its completion. Films featuring sound, sometimes called talkies, rapidly proliferated and gained widespread popularity. The industry achieved its first significant commercial triumph in 1934 with the release of Lava Kusha. The film, directed by C. Pullaiah and featuring Parupalli Subbarao and Sriranjani in prominent parts, garnered an exceptional audience turnout at theatres and propelled the emerging industry into the mainstream cultural landscape.

During the initial stages, mythological stories⁸ held a dominant position in the Telugu industry. By 1936, the widespread popularity of cinema enabled directors to shift their focus from religious and mythical subjects. In that particular year, Krithiventi Nageswara Rao directed the film "Prema Vijayam," which explicitly addresses societal issues⁹. The success of the film led to the creation of several more very successful 'social films', particularly 1939's Vande Mataram, which addressed societal problems such as the tradition of dowry. Telugu films exhibited a growing inclination towards depicting modern lifestyles: Of the 96 films released between 1937 and 1947, 29 revolved around social issues. It also inspired other filmmakers to address social issues. Topics such as untouchability, dowry, and the feudal system were prominently featured in Telugu cinema, particularly from 1939 onwards. Due to resource constraints during World War II, the British Raj placed restrictions on the usage of filmstrips in 1943. The altitude was decreased from 20,000 to 11,000 feet, resulting in a relative fall in film output.

The social problem film Mala Pilla, which starred Kanchanamala and was co-produced and directed by Gudavalli Ramabrahmam in 1938, focused on the fight against untouchability that prevailed in pre-independence India. In 1939, he helmed the film Raithu Bidda with the renowned actor Bellary Raghava. The British authority in the region prohibited the film due to its portrayal of the peasantry uprising against the Zamindars during the British Raj. The 1940 film Viswa Mohini was the first Indian film to portray the Indian movie industry. The film then progressed to produce sequel films, Savithri and Sathyabhama (1941–42), with the renowned actor Sthanam Narasimha Rao.

The period of Telugu Cinema's Golden Era

During this period, numerous independent studios were founded, and performers and actresses were signed on contractual terms, leading to a rapid growth of the Telugu industry. In the year 1950, a total of nineteen Telugu films were released. The trend of bilingual films in Tamil and Telugu was halted due to issues with expressiveness. In 1950, NT Rama, also known as NTR, became a distinguished figure in the cinema industry. The combination of Akkineni Nageswara Rao

⁸ A traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon.

⁹ A social issue is a problem that affects many people within a society. It is a group of common problems in present-day society and ones that many people strive to solve. It is often the consequence of factors extending beyond an individual's control.

and N.T. Rama Rao was highly successful in Telugu cinema, with their collaboration spanning 15 films, such as Palletnori pilla, Gundamma katha, Misamma, and Chanakya- Chandragupta.

Vijaya Vauhini Studios was established in 1948 in Chennai by Moola Narayana Swamy and B. N. Reddy. L. V. Prasad, a prominent figure in Indian cinema, established Prasad Studios in Chennai in 1956 after beginning his film career with Bhakta Pahlada. Nevertheless, thanks to the endeavors of D. V. S. Raju, the Telugu cinema industry saw a total relocation from Chennai to Hyderabad in the early 1990s, coinciding with N. T. Rama Rao's political tenure.

In 2006, 245 Telugu films were made, making it the most number of films produced in India during that year. The film studios in Hyderabad, established by D. Ramanaidu and Ramoji Rao, are engaged in extensive film production and provide significant employment opportunities. Among the biggest film schools in India include the Telangana Film and Television Institute, the Andhra Pradesh Film and Television Institute, the Ramanaidu Film School, etc. The Telugu states comprise roughly 2800 theatres, which is the most number of film halls in any state in India.

Trajectory of Dance in Telugu Cinema

The historical progression of dance in Telugu cinema is a compelling voyage that mirrors the region's developing cultural and creative panorama. The cinematic dance scenes were initially predominantly influenced by traditional dance styles firmly ingrained in the cultural legacy of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. During the initial years of Telugu cinema, particularly in the black-and-white period, dancing in films predominantly incorporated elements from classical Indian dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi.

In this era, dance functioned not only as a means of amusement but also as a narrative tool, frequently essential to the progression of the plot and the development of characters. Actresses proficient in traditional dance styles exuded an atmosphere of elegance and genuineness in their performances. Elaborate mudras, emotive facial expressions, and a profound association with mythological or historical subjects distinguished the early dance sequences.

Nevertheless, as Telugu films shifted to the color era and adopted a more modern cinematic style, the essence of dance underwent a substantial metamorphosis. The conventional, established dance forms started to coexist on film with a blend of folk and semi-classical styles. The decision was motivated by a desire to accommodate evolving audience tastes and a broader cultural acceptance of diversity.

The decades of the 1980s and 1990s were significant as they saw a growing integration of Western dance¹⁰ elements into Telugu films. During this period, they witnessed the rise of increasingly vibrant and vigorous dance routines, influenced by the worldwide appeal of genres such as Jazz¹¹ and Western Pop. Choreographers began to explore novel movements, bringing forth a more stylized and contemporary approach to dance in Telugu cinema.

The globalization of Telugu cinema in the 21st century has significantly hastened the transition towards modern dance techniques. The industry started integrating global dance styles such as Hip-hop¹², Salsa¹³, and Contemporary¹⁴, showcasing a more cosmopolitan and

¹⁰ Many different dances are done to country-western music. These dances include Two Step, Waltz, Cowboy or Traveling Cha Cha, Polka Ten Step (also known as Ten Step Polka), Schottische, and other Western promenade dances, East Coast Swing, West Coast Swing, and Nightclub Two Step.

¹¹ Jazz dance is a performance dance and style that arose in the United States in the mid-20th century. Jazz dance may allude to vernacular jazz, Broadway, or dramatic jazz. The two types expand on African American vernacular styles of dance that arose with jazz music.

¹² Hip-hop dance is a unique and exciting style of street dance that is most commonly performed to hip-hop music. Hip-hop dance is a vibrant form of dance that combines a variety of freestyle movements to create a cultural piece of art.

¹³ Salsa is a Latin dance, associated with salsa music, which was first popularized in the United States in the 1960s in New York City. Salsa is a mixture of Cuban dances, such as mambo, pachanga, and rumba, as well as American dances such as swing and tap.

¹⁴ Contemporary dance is a genre of dance performance that developed during the mid-twentieth century and has since grown to become one of the dominant genres for formally trained dancers throughout the world, with particularly strong popularity in the U.S. and Europe.

interconnected globe. This significant deviation from conventional dancing not only broadened the visual lexicon of Telugu cinema but also corresponded with the industry's aspirations to attract a broader, more varied audience.

Contemporary dance forms have become essential to item numbers, promotional music videos, and significant storyline elements in Telugu films. Actresses proficient in Western dance styles rose to prominence, playing an indispensable role in ushering in a new era of dance in Telugu cinema marked by a blend of many styles, inclusivity, and a global artistic sensibility.

The development of dance in Telugu cinema has progressed from being dominated by traditional classical forms to being a vibrant fusion of several global influences. This evolution signifies the shifting preferences and tastes of the public. It demonstrates the industry's ability to adjust to an increasingly globalizing world, where cultural interaction and fusion are crucial in developing artistic expression.

Cultural Implications of Global Dance Fusion in Telugu Industry

The use of many international dance styles in Telugu films has significant cultural ramifications, showcasing a dynamic change in the portrayal of different cultures and adding to a broader narrative of inclusiveness. The cultural phenomena observed in Telugu cinema have extensive ramifications that surpass primary amusement, as they influence societal perspectives, challenge conventional beliefs, and cultivate a feeling of worldwide interconnectedness.

An essential cultural consequence is the representation of diversity and inclusiveness. Telugu movie serves as a platform for displaying the diversity of global cultures by incorporating different dance styles. Combining Flamenco¹⁵, Hip-hop, Salsa, and other dance genres offers a visually vibrant tribute to variety, defying conventional standards and broadening the range of cultural portrayal. Not only does this expand the cultural perspectives of the audience, but it also fosters a more inclusive and tolerant society.

Furthermore, the integration of dance styles from around the world in Telugu movies is an effective means of challenging and dismantling prejudices. Historically, particular dance styles have been linked to specific civilizations or geographical areas. Nevertheless, integrating several global dance genres confronts and undermines preexisting assumptions and generalizations. This exemplifies the universality of artistic expression and every dance form's inherent beauty and relevance, regardless of its ethnic origins.

The portrayal of worldwide dance fusion in Telugu cinema also significantly impacts cultural diplomacy. The dance business employs soft power to promote a favorable perception of cultural exchange. The fusion of several dance genres serves as a symbolic act of solidarity, surpassing geopolitical disparities and cultivating a sense of collective human experience. Using dance sequences as a form of cultural diplomacy fosters connections and promotes understanding across different cultures and nations.

Moreover, the cultural ramifications encompass empowering artists and validating various skills. By incorporating worldwide dance styles, the business fosters inclusivity and attracts artists from all backgrounds, expanding the talent pool. The incorporation of many perspectives enhances the film experience and conveys a compelling message regarding the significance of diversity in artistic representation. The worldwide amalgamation of dance also functions as a mirror of current cultural patterns and the changing preferences of the spectators. As the audience's global awareness and interconnectedness increase, the portrayal of international dance styles aligns with their exposure to various cultural influences. Consequently, the cinema business is compelled to modify and tailor its content to meet the needs of a diverse audience, thus guaranteeing its significance in an ever more interconnected world.

¹⁵ Flamenco is an art form based on the various folkloric music traditions of southern Spain, developed within the gitano subculture of the region of Andalusia, and also having historical presence in Extremadura and Murcia.

Conclusion

The globalization of dance in Telugu cinema is a direct result of technological advancements and the world's growing interconnectedness. It is a passing trend and a manifestation of the current cultural dynamics. The industry's use of international dance techniques guarantees its significance in a globalized world and establishes Telugu cinema as a cultural envoy, appealing to viewers globally.

The transition from conventional to global dance fusion in the Telugu cinema business clearly demonstrates the industry's capacity to progress, create new ideas, and adjust accordingly. Telugu cinema's incorporation of many dance traditions not only influences the cultural scene locally but also adds to the global conversation on the influence of artistic expression in promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. The use of several international dance techniques in Telugu cinema serves as more than just a creative decision; it represents a cultural declaration that honors the harmonious coexistence of different cultures and the universally understood art form of dance.

The cultural ramifications of incorporating worldwide dance fusion in the Telugu cinema industry are diverse. The fusion of international dance styles plays a vital role in shaping the shifting cultural narrative within the industry. It challenges preconceptions, promotes inclusivity, acts as cultural diplomacy, and reflects modern artistic trends. By incorporating worldwide dance fusion, Telugu movie serves as a cultural ambassador, surpassing limitations and honoring the diverse range of human expression.

Moreover, the cultural ramifications encompass empowering artists and validating various skills. By incorporating worldwide dance styles, the business fosters inclusivity and attracts artists from all backgrounds, expanding the talent pool. The incorporation of many perspectives enhances the film experience and conveys a compelling message regarding the significance of diversity in artistic representation.

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Telugu Cinema in Motion: Exploring the Journey of Dance from Classical to Contemporary

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Abstract

This paper investigates the shifting paradigms of dance representation in Telugu cinema, foregrounding its transition from classical traditions to contemporary expressions, and also explores how classical dance forms, particularly Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam, were central to early Telugu films, representing cultural identity, moral virtue, and devotional aesthetics. With the changing cinematic landscape, dance evolved into a hybridized medium, blending folk idioms, western influences, and urban movements, reflecting the socio-political shifts, modernization, and globalization impacting regional cinema. Through a critical and interdisciplinary lens, the paper analyses key dance sequences, choreographic styles, and the role of performers and choreographers in shaping cinematic narratives. It interrogates the negotiation between tradition and innovation, the impact of technological advancements, and the commodification of dance in mainstream cinema. By mapping this journey, the article contributes to the discourse on performativity, cultural continuity, and transformation within Telugu popular culture. The study draws on film analysis, performance theory, and cultural studies to argue that dance in Telugu cinema remains a powerful medium for articulating identity, aspiration, and spectacle.

Keywords: Telugu cinema, classical dance, contemporary choreography, Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam, South Indian cinema, performance studies, cultural transformation, dance in film, cinematic aesthetics.

Introduction: Dance as Narrative and Spectacle in Telugu Cinema

The relationship between cinema and dance in India is long-standing, complex, and culturally dense. In regional industries such as Telugu cinema (popularly known as Tollywood), dance is not merely an aesthetic addition but a core storytelling mechanism. Unlike the Hollywood tradition, where musical sequences are often relegated to a specific genre, Indian cinema merges dance seamlessly into mainstream narrative structures, especially in its regional iterations. Telugu cinema, with its roots in classical performing arts, folk traditions, and devotional theatre, has developed a unique grammar where dance occupies a privileged position, both diegetically and non-diegetically.

Early Telugu films, particularly from the 1930s through the 1950s, were often mythological and heavily influenced by classical performance traditions such as **Kuchipudi**¹—a form indigenous to Andhra Pradesh—and **Bharatanatyam**², which was widely codified and institutionalized during the nationalist period (Meduri, 2005; O'Shea, 2007). These forms were featured in films like *Bhakta Prahlada* (1932), *Maya Bazaar* (1957), and *Sankarabharanam* (1980), where dance was employed not only to depict devotion and spiritual transcendence but also to establish cultural authenticity and moral authority. In these contexts, dance was narrative—it explained, enriched, and elevated the storyline.

The deployment of classical dance also coincided with efforts at cultural revival during and after the Indian independence movement. The female dancer's body became a symbolic site for

¹ Kuchipudi is one of the eight major Indian classical dances. It originates from a village named Kuchipudi in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Kuchipudi is a dance-drama performance, with its roots in the ancient Hindu Sanskrit text of Natya Shastra

² Bharatanātyam is an Indian classical dance form that originated in Tamil Nadu, India.

expressing national identity, chastity, and traditional values (Soneji, 2012). Female dancers, often portrayed as apsaras, devadasis, or royal courtesans, were visualized through a lens that combined reverence with erotic spectacle. This duality formed part of the filmic gaze—a blend of devotion and desire—which shaped the choreographic narrative of Telugu cinema.

As the industry transitioned into the modern era—from the 1970s onwards—cinema witnessed increasing hybridization. Choreographers began integrating folk idioms with cinematic liberties, and later, global dance styles such as jazz, hip-hop, salsa, and contemporary movement vocabularies began to infiltrate the screen. These transitions reflected broader social changes: the influence of liberalization in the 1990s, the expansion of media technologies, urbanization, and a growing youth demographic with different aesthetic appetites. Dance numbers became increasingly spectacular and commercial, as seen in the rise of the so-called “item song” and star-centric dance performances that prioritized speed, glamour, and virality over classical precision (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 2004).

Classical Roots: The Integration of Kuchipudi in Early Cinema Dance as Devotion, Tradition, and Moral Pedagogy

The integration of classical dance in early Telugu cinema is deeply rooted in the rich aesthetic and cultural frameworks that have shaped Indian art traditions. Particularly, the *Nāṭya Shāstra*³ and *Bhakti* movement⁴ performance practices have played a significant role. Within this context, Kuchipudi, a classical dance form indigenous to Andhra Pradesh, held a pivotal position as both a spiritual and cultural expression. Its codified vocabulary, devotional themes, and dramatic components made it an ideal artistic form for cinema, especially during its mythological and nationalist phases, resonating deeply with our cultural heritage.

Kuchipudi's inclusion in Telugu cinema was not merely for visual ornamentation, but it served a higher purpose as a medium of moral pedagogy. It was a way to educate audiences on values such as *dharma* (righteousness), *bhakti* (devotion), and *Satyam* (truth), aligning with the ideological imperatives of early Indian cinema.

Dance in this period was thus inseparable from cinema's didactic and affective goals. The performative elements of Kuchipudi—its expressive *abhinaya*, narrative-driven *nritya*, and rootedness in Sanskrit and Telugu literary traditions—contributed to the film's pedagogic and emotional resonance. Classical dance, in this way, became a cinematic tool for reinforcing traditional values, often situated within the larger narrative of divine intervention, moral dilemmas, and righteous conduct, evoking powerful emotions in the audience.

Iconic Mythological and Historical Films Featuring Classical Dance

The mythological genre dominated Telugu cinema from the 1930s through the 1960s, providing fertile ground for using classical dance forms like Kuchipudi. These films typically depicted stories from the *Ramayana*⁵, *Mahabharata*⁶, and *Puranas*⁷, where gods, sages, and celestial beings engaged in acts of devotion, penance, and celebration. Dance sequences in such

³ The *Nāṭya Shāstra* is a Sanskrit treatise on the performing arts. The text is attributed to sage Bharata, and its first complete compilation is dated to between 200 BCE and 200 CE, but estimates vary between 500 BCE and 500 CE.

⁴ The *Bhakti* movement was a significant religious and social reform movement in medieval India, emphasizing personal devotion to God (*bhakti*) over ritualistic practices and caste distinctions.

⁵ The *Ramayana*, also known as *Valmiki Ramayana*, as traditionally attributed to Valmiki, is a *smṛiti* text from ancient India, one of the two important epics of Hinduism known as the *Itihasas*, the other being the *Mahabharata*.

⁶ The *Mahābhārata* is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India revered as *Smṛiti* texts in Hinduism, the other being the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It narrates the events and aftermath of the Kurukshetra War, a war of succession between two groups of princely cousins, the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas

⁷ *Puranas* are Hindu religious texts, a form of Sanskrit literature, that delve into various aspects of Indian mythology, history, and philosophy

films were used to illustrate divine attributes, mark significant events, or signal moments of revelation and transformation.

In *Maya Bazaar* (1957), one of Telugu cinema's most iconic films, the dance of Ghatotkacha, though laced with comedic elements, incorporates stylized movement vocabulary that reflects classical influence. Similarly, *Lava Kusa* (1963) contains beautifully choreographed sequences rooted in temple dance aesthetics, showcasing dance's performative and narrative capacities.

Historical dramas such as *Sri Venkateswara Mahatyam* (1960) and *Shakuntala* (1940) featured dance sequences that relied on classical idioms. These sequences were often staged within royal courts or temple contexts, signaling the socio-religious importance of dance as an elite and sacred art. The meticulous attention to *mudras*, costume design, and *raga-based* compositions demonstrated the filmmakers' commitment to authenticity and reverence for classical art forms.

Importantly, these films played a significant role in popularizing Kuchipudi beyond traditional performance venues. Through cinema, Kuchipudi reached urban and rural audiences alike, creating a new cultural circuit where dance was simultaneously traditional, modern, sacred, and spectacular.

Representation of Gender and Idealized Femininity through Classical Forms

While classical dance in early Telugu cinema celebrated cultural heritage and spiritual devotion, it also significantly constructed gender ideals, particularly around femininity. Female dancers were often portrayed as vessels of devotion, grace, and sacrifice, embodying the values expected of women in postcolonial and patriarchal Indian society.

Films like *Devadasi* (1954) and *Jayabheri* (1959) depicted female dancers within the tension between artistic vocation and social respectability. In *Jayabheri*, for instance, the character of a devout female dancer struggles between her calling and the rigid norms of caste and class. While powerful and transformative, her dance is also a site of social negotiation. Classical dance in these narratives becomes a double-edged symbol—it elevates the female character's spiritual stature while also framing her as an object of the male gaze (Gopal & Moorti, 2008).

Kuchipudi, historically including male and female performers, was re-gendered through cinema. In many films, it became a feminized aesthetic associated with demure beauty, erotic appeal, and spiritual purity. The ideal dancer-heroine was graceful, chaste, and emotionally expressive—qualities aligned with the *Sanskritized* notion of *natyasundari*, or the ideal female performer (Srinivasan, 2011).

Costume, choreography, and camera work further reinforced these ideals. Classical sequences often featured ornate temple jewelry, silk costumes, and devotional lighting, framing the female dancer as an aesthetic and moral icon. Slow panning shots, frontal compositions, and close-ups of *Abhinaya* enhanced the sensual and emotional appeal of her performance, while also subjecting it to cinematic control and consumption. This duality—devotional transcendence and erotic spectacle—has been a recurring trope in Indian cinema's representation of female dancers. As Laura Mulvey (1975) argues, cinema often positions the female body as a 'to-be-looked-at-ness,' a concept that refers to the objectification of women in film, where they exist primarily for the visual pleasure of the male viewer. In the context of Telugu cinema, classical dance has often served as the site for negotiating this visual pleasure with cultural legitimacy.

Transition and Hybridity: Folk, Semi-Classical, and Social Dance Forms

Influence of Folk Traditions and Regional Aesthetics

As Telugu cinema evolved beyond mythological and devotional themes into the domains of social realism and mass entertainment, the role of dance transformed correspondingly. A significant aspect of this transformation was the influence of regional folk traditions on cinematic choreography. Folk forms such as Lambadi, Dappu, Veeranatyam, and Kolattam—deeply embedded in the agrarian, ritual, and celebratory practices of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana—began to find representation on screen, either as authentic recreations or stylized pastiches.

The incorporation of folk idioms⁸ in dance numbers served multiple purposes. Firstly, it localized the cinematic narrative, providing regional audiences with ethnographic texture and cultural familiarity. Secondly, folk dance sequences often marked communal celebration, harvest festivals, or social gatherings within the narrative, functioning as emotive and rhythmic interludes in the story. Thirdly, these dances invoked a sense of vernacular modernity—they were native yet malleable, lending themselves to adaptation and cinematic spectacle (Sundar, 2014).

Emergence of Semi-Classical and Cinematic Adaptations

By the late 1970s and 1980s, Telugu cinema began to produce hybrid choreographic vocabularies that merged classical grammar with popular movement styles. This period witnessed the birth of what is often referred to as semi-classical dance—a genre that maintained the elegance of classical forms while incorporating the accessibility and flair of cinema. Choreographers like Saleem, Tara, and Sundaram Master, among others, played pivotal roles in blending Bharatanatyam or Kuchipudi *adavus* with folk footwork, filmic gestures, and Bollywood-style stylization.

Semi-classical dance in Telugu films often appeared in sequences where the narrative required the depiction of *bhakti*, love, or transformation, but within a commercially palatable format. For instance, songs such as “*Vennello Godari Andam*” from *Sagara Sangamam* or “*Dhim Tanana*” from *Swarnakamalam* (1988) retain classical postures and emotional depth while adapting to rhythmic structures and visual aesthetics that are cinematic and contemporary. These performances appealed to a broad cross-section of viewers—those who appreciated the sophistication of classical dance and those drawn to popular entertainment.

The cinematic adaptation of movement also involved technical innovations. Camera angles, editing rhythms, set design, and costume choices amplified the visual impact of dance, making even stylized classical or folk movements appear larger than life. This was particularly significant in a period when television had not yet become dominant, and cinema halls were the primary space for mass cultural consumption.

Dance as a Tool for Storytelling in Social Dramas

In the landscape of Telugu social dramas, dance was no longer restricted to ornamental or religious functions. It became integral to narrative exposition, character development, and thematic articulation. Films such as *Sankarabharanam*, *Swarnakamalam*, *Swayamkrushi* (1987), and *Sitaara* (1984) used dance not only to showcase talent or aesthetics but to embody conflicts between tradition and modernity, rural and urban life, and art versus commerce.

For example, in *Swarnakamalam*, dance becomes the medium through which the female protagonist reconnects with her heritage, self-worth, and artistic identity. Her reluctance and later embrace of classical dance mirror her internal journey, highlighting the performance’s psychological and philosophical dimensions. Similarly, in *Sagara Sangamam*, Kamal Haasan’s character—a failed classical dancer—is portrayed as an artistic purist struggling against a changing cultural milieu that prefers spectacle over substance. His dances become elegiac, speaking to loss, memory, and integrity in a commodified world.

These films, particularly those directed by K. Viswanath, elevated dance to a narrative and ideological cornerstone, using it as a symbolic device to comment on social issues such as caste oppression, gender inequality, and the marginalization of traditional knowledge systems. Viswanath’s oeuvre is marked by a humanistic portrayal of artists—dancers, musicians, and actors—as custodians of intangible heritage under threat from modernity and commercialization (Dudrah & Desai, 2008).

The Modern Turn: Urbanization, Globalization, and Contemporary Choreography Western Influence and the Rise of Commercial Dance

The late 20th and early 21st centuries signified a pivotal transition in Telugu cinema, influenced by urbanization, globalization, and liberalization, which altered production and

⁸ An idiom is a phrase or expression that largely or exclusively carries a figurative or non-literal meaning, rather than making any literal sense

aesthetics. A notable transformation transpired in cinematic dance, which progressively mirrored the impact of Western forms and commercial choreography. With the liberalization of its markets in the 1990s, India experienced an influx of media imports—music videos, Hollywood films, and MTV culture—that transformed the visual and kinesthetic lexicon of Indian popular culture. Telugu cinema, particularly its dance sequences, responded with an infusion of hip-hop, jazz, salsa, ballet, and breakdance elements, resulting in eclectic and hybrid choreographic forms.

This “modern turn” in choreography is not merely an aesthetic trend but a structural response to the changing socio-economic aspirations of urban Indian audiences. The new Indian middle class—tech-savvy, global in outlook, and aspirational—sought representation in the cultural artifacts it consumed. In response, choreographers like Raju Sundaram, Prabhu Deva, and later Jani Master and Shekar Master introduced movement vocabularies that fused Western dynamism with Indian rhythm structures.

Music Videos, Item Numbers, and the Evolution of Star-Driven Dance

The rise of item numbers and standalone music video-style sequences marks another significant development in contemporary Telugu cinematic choreography. Item numbers, typically featuring a glamorous performer in a non-narrative setting, evolved as set pieces of visual excess and erotic spectacle. While early examples like “*Rukku Rukku Arey Rukmini*” (Ninne Pelladatha, 1996) were still embedded within the film’s storyline, later numbers—“*Aa Ante Amalapuram*” (Arya, 2004), “*Kevvu Keka*” (Gabbar Singh, 2012), or “*Butta Bomma*” (Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo, 2020)—often functioned as autonomous products designed for **viral** circulation and digital consumption.

These sequences underscore the centrality of star personas in the marketing and choreography of Telugu cinema. Actors like Chiranjeevi, Allu Arjun, Jr. NTR, and Ram Charan have shaped their screen image through distinctive dance styles—high energy, technical finesse, and signature moves—which fans emulate and re-circulate via social media. In this sense, choreography becomes a performative extension of star identity, contributing to the actor’s symbolic capital and commercial bankability (Dudrah, 2012).

Moreover, the increasing collaboration with international choreographers and the influence of reality dance television has further professionalized and stylized cinematic dance. Songs are now produced akin to music videos, emphasizing costume design, lighting, location aesthetics, and post-production, pushing dance sequences into the realm of audio-visual spectacle and global visual grammar (Thomas, 2005).

Changing Audience Expectations and Consumption Patterns

A notable change in contemporary times is the shift in audience expectations and consumption practices. Owing to the proliferation of digital platforms, streaming services, and social media, dance in Telugu cinema is no longer confined to the chronological flow of the film. Instead, it circulates as discrete, shareable content—clips, reels, memes, remixes—that reach a global Telugu-speaking diaspora and non-Telugu audiences alike.

This fragmentation of cinematic experience has reoriented the choreographic process itself. Songs are now choreographed with “moments” in mind—signature steps, hook steps, or TikTok-friendly gestures—that can go viral. The phenomenon of dance-based challenges (#ButtaBommaChallenge, #RowdyBaby, etc.) exemplifies the participatory nature of contemporary spectatorship, where fans not only consume but perform, reproduce, and re-author cinematic choreography (Niranjana, 2020).

In tandem, the audience’s increasing visual literacy has raised the bar for complexity, precision, and innovation. Choreographers must cater to an audience attuned to K-pop, Western pop stars, and dance influencers, resulting in fast-paced, hyper-stylized, and often syncretic choreography, drawing from multiple global movement traditions while retaining an Indian rhythm and narrative sensibility.

Simultaneously, this transformation raises critical questions about authenticity, cultural memory, and artistic integrity. The marginalization of classical and folk idioms in favor of flashy,

commercialized dance raises concerns about the erosion of traditional forms and the over-commodification of the dancing body. Nevertheless, contemporary choreography in Telugu cinema stands as a vibrant, mutable expression of its time, attuned to the demands of the market, responsive to technological shifts, and deeply embedded in the structures of spectacle and capital (Vasudevan, 2010).

The Role of Choreographers and Technology in Dance Evolution in Telugu Cinema Prominent Choreographers and Their Stylistic Innovations

The evolution of dance in Telugu cinema has been significantly shaped by choreographers who, in response to socio-cultural shifts, have actively redefined the aesthetics, politics, and commercial logic of dance on screen. Their innovative contributions, from classical-rooted stylizations to contemporary fusions, have positioned them as cultural auteurs, exercising creative agency over movement vocabularies, body aesthetics, and cinematic spectacle.

Early Telugu cinema saw choreographers like Pasumarthy Krishnamurthy and Heeralal Master working within classical and folk paradigms. Their work emphasized expressive abhinaya, structured footwork, and regional authenticity, particularly in mythological and devotional films like *Mayabazar* (1957) and *Lava Kusa* (1963), where dance served as a moral pedagogy and spiritual narrative medium.

From the 1980s onwards, figures like Raghuram Master and Sundaram Master initiated a significant departure by integrating Bharatanatyam and folk idioms with stylized cinematic flair. However, it was Prabhu Deva who heralded a revolutionary shift. Dubbed “India’s Michael Jackson,” Prabhu Deva’s choreography introduced street dance, hip-hop, and funk elements with an unmistakable urban and kinetic energy. His work in films such as *Premikudu* (1994) and *Iddaru* (1997) demonstrated a new physicality of dance—youthful, rebellious, and globalized (Rao, 2011).

The 2000s witnessed the emergence of choreographers like Raju Sundaram, Jani Master, Sekhar Master, and Ganesh Acharya, each contributing distinctive movement idioms. Raju Sundaram’s style combined breakdance, jazz, and fast-paced footwork, while Jani Master’s choreography is known for its high-octane, rhythmically dense compositions that often blur boundaries between dance and stunt. Sekhar Master, by contrast, emphasizes fluid transitions and crowd-inclusive movements, crafting hook steps that cater to viral social media consumption, as seen in *Butta Bomma* from *Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo* (2020).

Impact of Editing, Camera Work, and CGI on Dance Presentation

Technological advancements in cinematography, editing, and post-production have dramatically altered how dance is constructed, perceived, and consumed in Telugu cinema. These transformations have opened up new possibilities and avenues for dance presentation, sparking intrigue and curiosity among the audience.

Editing rhythms today are tightly synchronized with music beats, using rapid cuts, jump edits, and montage to intensify the perception of speed and precision. As a result, the viewer no longer watches a dance but experiences an audio-visual kinetic event, often more stylized than realistic (Rajadhyaksha, 2009). While visually stimulating, this approach often prioritizes spectacle over the authenticity or fluidity of movement. Camera work, too, has become integral to dance choreography. Cinematographers collaborate with choreographers to design movements for dancers and the camera itself. Techniques like tracking shots, crane movements, dolly zooms, and aerial drones are employed to create dynamic spatial illusions. For example, in *Rangasthalam* (2018), the earthy, rhythmic folk dances are elevated by handheld, ground-level shots that immerse the viewer in the performative landscape of rural Andhra.

Additionally, the use of CGI (Computer-Generated Imagery) and visual effects (VFX) has introduced new layers to the representation of dance. Though more frequently used in action or fantasy genres, VFX has also begun to shape song sequences—adding artificial backgrounds, multiplying dancers, enhancing costume elements, or integrating fantastical props. For instance, item numbers or dream sequences now often use digitally rendered sets, giving dance a surreal,

immersive quality. This is seen in *Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy* (2019), where historical dance sequences are digitally embedded within epic set pieces.

Conclusion

The journey of dance in Telugu cinema—from its classical moorings in Kuchipudi and devotional traditions to its contemporary manifestations shaped by globalization, technology, and popular culture—reveals a rich and evolving artistic landscape. This transformation is not merely stylistic but deeply reflective of the cultural, political, and technological shifts that have redefined South Indian society over the decades.

At its origins, dance in Telugu films was steeped in ritual, mythology, and moral pedagogy, drawing from the performative legacies of Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, and regional folk forms. Classical dance, as seen in early mythological and historical narratives, legitimized idealized femininity, spiritual devotion, and cultural continuity, with the dancer often positioned as a conduit of divine or historical memory.

As cinema moved into the post-independence and post-liberalization periods, dance too underwent a paradigm shift—moving from the devotional to the secular, from ritual to entertainment, and from form to spectacle. The integration of folk, semi-classical, and later Western-influenced dance forms reflected the hybrid aesthetics of a society negotiating between tradition and modernity. This hybridity manifested in movement vocabularies and costume, music, setting, and cinematic narrative strategies.

The rise of choreographers as auteurs and cultural innovators—figures like Prabhu Deva, Raju Sundaram, Sekhar Master, and Jani Master—has been instrumental in shaping the dance narrative of contemporary Telugu films. Their work transcends mere step-making, crafting embodied visual language that speaks to generational aspirations, regional pride, and global influence. Simultaneously, advancements in cinematic technology—editing, CGI, camera movement—have transformed choreography into a multimedia event, extending the dancer's performance beyond the corporeal and into the virtual.

Importantly, this evolution underscores how dance in Telugu cinema functions as entertainment, a repository of cultural memory, a medium of identity formation, and a site of aesthetic experimentation. It remains deeply responsive to audience expectations, industry demands, and socio-political contexts while still holding space for the nuanced interplay of tradition, innovation, and spectacle.

In conclusion, the story of dance in Telugu cinema is the story of Telugu cinema itself: dynamic, layered, and continuously negotiating between the sacred and the spectacular. It invites scholars, practitioners, and audiences alike to recognize choreography not as an ancillary art form but as a central expressive force that shapes Telugu popular culture's emotional, cultural, and visual imagination. As we move further into a digital and globalized media era, the challenge and opportunity lie in sustaining the integrity of classical and regional forms while embracing contemporary cinematic choreography's pluralities and creative freedoms.

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